

ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS

—THE JAPANESE FAMILY SYSTEM

by

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compiled by

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FOREWORD

The Japanese National Commission for Unesco has been carrying out, since 1958, a project of translating Japanese philosophical works into foreign languages and publishing them with a view to introducing Japanese thought to the people of other countries. Under this project, we have so far brought out eight titles, and the present title is the ninth of the series.

Japanese people have commonly been called as the people who respect their ancestors, and eventually make much of their family lineages, thus giving birth to their ancestor worship. A complete translation of the volume written by Mr. Kunio Yanagita will cast a light on the many aspects of the above subject, and it is our hope that this edition will be of use for those who are engaged in the studies of Japan, its culture, its thought and its people.

We are greatly indebted to Professor Ichirô Hori of the University of Tokyo, Professor Herman Ooms, Mrs. Fanny Hagin Mayer and Miss Yasuyo Ishiwara, all of whom co-operated in the editorial work in many ways. I also express my thanks to Mr. Tokihiko Ohfuji, proxy of author's right, the Chikuma Shobô, publisher of the original edition, and the Yanagita Bunko of the Seijô University for their active co-operation to our project.

July 1970

Ryoji Ito
Secretary-General
Japanese National Commission for Unesco

A WORD FROM THE TRANSLATORS

The following comments are about style in our translation. We have approached our task bearing in mind the author's purpose as stated in his Preface. Above all, he wanted to communicate with the youth of his land who were facing the postwar period. He wanted to offer them facts about the history of the Japanese family and the faith founded upon it. The work was not written as an academic report although the author's extensive knowledge of history and philology are apparent. At the age of seventy-one he was writing rapidly and under great stress during the fire-bombing of Tokyo in the spring of 1945. He did not employ footnotes, so our brief notes are offered in a separate section. This was done to preserve his intimate, flowing style, verging upon the conversational.

Japanese characters appear in the text only when the discussion bears directly upon them. Japanese terms used in the text are italicized and their meaning is given in brackets upon their first appearance. Characters for these as well as proper nouns and titles of works are given in the Character-Index. Some terms in the Character-Index have been grouped alphabetically under the principal component, which is also done where the honorific is used except where it has become an integral part of the word. We have given romanized versions of quotations for readers with an interest in them and added our translations in brackets. Other explanations or parenthetical words which are in brackets are also our own.

We wish to thank Professor Hori Ichiro for reading our manuscript and making suggestions. With this brief word we offer the translation with gratitude for the experience and study it has afforded us and the hope that it will contribute to an understanding of the faith of common people in Japan.

Fanny Hagin Mayer and Ishiwara Yasuyo

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YANAGITA KUNIO AND “ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS”

Ichiro Hori and Herman Ooms

Japan has been called a gold mine for folklorists. The man who first discovered its riches and explored its treasures with an undiminishing perseverance is Yanagita Kunio* (1875-1962). Yet, the bulk of his work, comprising some one hundred books and over a thousand articles, recently re-edited in thirty-five volumes, has, because of the language barrier, attracted little attention outside Japan. The hope is that the present translation of *About Our Ancestors* will open an avenue to the impressive accomplishments of the founder of folklore studies in Japan.

Yanagita Kunio is hardly known abroad. Only a few of his articles and some of his collections of Japanese folk tales have been translated into Western languages. Therefore, a brief personal sketch will be offered to provide the necessary background for a proper understanding of Yanagita's involved scholarship.

The father of Yanagita Kunio, a physician and Shintô scholar from the school of Hirata Atsutane, in middle age became a Shintô priest. Yanagita's education at home was responsible for his early acquaintance with Japanese classics. His parents fostered in him the deep religious convictions concerning the family and the ancestors, which would inspire much of his research.

His career as a scholar had a late start. In the first twenty-five years after graduation from Tokyo Imperial University, he built a career as a bureaucrat. It was only in his mid-thirties that he started showing an interest in folklore. His work since 1900, as an official of the Department of Agriculture had given him multiple contacts with the rural population of Japan. An intense love for his country, much in the tradition of the *Kokugaku* (National Learning), was the driving force

behind his plan to undertake a folklore study of rural Japan for the purpose of writing Japan's village history. During the spare moments in his numerous inspection trips throughout the country, Yanagita had ample opportunity to gather the colossal amount of material necessary to realize his project.

After some twenty years service in the Department of Agriculture, Yanagita subsequently headed the Section of the Archives in the Department of the Imperial Household and held the post of Chief Secretary of the House of Peers. Then, in 1920, at the age of forty-six, he was appointed a member of the Japanese Mission to the League of Nations in Geneva. He stayed in Europe for about three years with some of his best friends, including Nitobe Inazô, the author of several works on Japan's culture. This was Yanagita's first sojourn abroad. It offered him a unique chance to satisfy his intellectual curiosity concerning the folklore and anthropological studies of Europe. In 1923, he joined the staff of the "Asahi Shimbun" as an editorial writer with a particular interest in social planning; finally he was able to orient his field trips to the sole purpose of his studies.

Folklore studies in the West had at that time already taken the road of cross-cultural comparison. Yanagita, however, limited himself to the observation, description and interpretation of the customs of Japan only. This limitation had its methodological reasons. Yanagita had to set himself to the arduous task of collecting the enormous amount of untouched material of the Japanese field, before engaging in hasty comparisons. However, ideological factors also played a role in determining the field, and, still more, Yanagita's approach to it.

Japanese are very conscious of their own culture. On this point they probably do not differ much from other peoples. But among a considerable part of the Japanese, this national consciousness takes a particular form. In their eyes, cultural phenomena such as Buddhism or Confucianism, which have been flourishing for centuries on Japanese soil, and which an outsider naturally considers to constitute an integral part of the national heritage, are foreign and not Japanese. This acute awareness of things "foreign" and things "genuinely Japanese" had been at

the heart of the academic tradition of the *Kokugaku* during the Tokugawa era, and had also been expressed politically since the Meiji restoration.

The scholars in the *Kokugaku* tradition, inspired by a rather romantic nostalgia for the pristine originality of Japanese culture, rejected in a vigorous way the religious traditions that had been introduced from abroad. Their valuable contributions were mostly made in the field of the critical study of Japanese literature and ancient mythology. However, these Shintô scholars, in their endeavours to purify the Japanese tradition from its foreign elements and thus to restore the proper Japanese belief, borrowed their conceptual tools and terminology from the Buddhist or Confucian traditions they were fighting. They, therefore, alienated themselves to a considerable degree from the living folk tradition they were trying to defend.

Yanagita, as can be seen from his anti-clerical remarks on Buddhism, shares with Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane this concern about the purity of Japanese culture, but he does not adopt their theories and methods. Their studies systematized popular belief in order to make it more resistant to Confucianism and Buddhism. The writings of these Shintô scholars are, in the eyes of Yanagita, too much a reflection of their polemic: their history of Japan is a history of Shintô thinkers. That is the reason why Yanagita almost completely rejected the use of literary sources. He preferred to rely upon the observation of rites and customs and upon the living oral tradition, because he was convinced that in this way he would be able to come to a grasp with the real Japanese mind as it has been alive for centuries.

Yanagita's distrust of the written word stems from his conviction that the introduction of Chinese characters has inevitably resulted in a change in Japanese thinking. The Chinese writing has often differentiated and rendered more specific the meaning of some terms. In other cases it has given a Buddhist form to beliefs or concepts the content of which goes back to pre-Buddhist times. Some knowledge of the place of folk religion in modern Japanese society will clarify these and other issues of Yanagita's scholarship.

In Japan, the folk traditions have not disappeared under the pressure

of a powerful religion as they did in the West. They did not capitulate, neither did they persist intact. They have very often adjusted their form to the novel foreign elements, which in turn went through a process of acculturation to the Japanese scene. The result is what is often referred to as "Japanese religion": a fairly homogeneous blend of several major religious traditions—Shintô, Confucianism and Buddhism. Thus, Japanese folk belief is remarkably different from its European counterpart. In Europe, folk belief leads a marginal existence in a predominantly Christian society and takes the form of survivals. There the task of folklore studies consists mainly of tracing down these survivals in remote areas, in the hope that they remained preserved from Christian influence. On the contrary, Japanese folk belief, however, it might have altered its form, never lost its vitality and is still dynamic all over the archipelago. Japanese folk belief, in order to show its "true" nature, only needs a "face lifting." Thus Yanagita's intention was to work his way through the tangle of Japanese customs and beliefs in order to reach their original form. Yanagita's common purpose with the *Kokugaku* school in this respect is clear. It is no wonder then that Yanagita himself, acknowledging this common goal, but also conscious of the novelty of his methodology and level of research, called his folklore studies the *Shin-kokugaku*, the New National Learning.³

Although the academic concern of Yanagita lay with the "authentic" ancient Japanese culture, a warm sympathy for the living people he was writing about and a deep concern for their future permeates his prose. Indeed, he identified himself with the subjects of his research to the point that the reader cannot but sense the personal involvement of the author in the beliefs he is treating. As in the case of Hozumi Nobushige's study⁴ of the influence of the ancestor cult on Japanese Law, the reader is confronted with the viewpoint of an "ancestor worshipper." In this way *About Our Ancestors* is more than a mere record of the rich field experience of a scholar. It is to the same degree a confession of Yanagita's own convictions and sentiment, and a tentative exposition of his views on the relevance of that sentiment to the rebuilding of a nation threatened by the social disruptions brought about the Second World War.

YANAGITA KUNIO AND "ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS"

The circumstances under which the book was written have no doubt contributed to its atmosphere of urgency. As the author states in his preface, he wrote the book during the short period of two months, April and May 1945. These were the months that the fire-bomb raids were being carried out over Tokyo. He was under pressure and anxiety because he thought, as he admitted himself later, that he would never live to write further works. He was anxious to state once more, with new supporting material, some hypotheses already formulated the year before in his address *Uji-gamisama to Kyôiku-sha* (The *Uji-gami* and the Educators)⁵ concerning the practice of ancestor worship, so vital in Yanagita's eyes for the spiritual revival of the country.

Danger was real and death everywhere in those days as will be clear from the following anecdote, kindly reported to the author of this foreword by Mrs. Fanny Hagin Mayer, a long time student of Yanagita and co-translator of this work. Because Yanagita's handwriting was not available for printing, an assistant had the task of rewriting the copy for the printer. She was making almost daily trips to Yanagita's office during the bombing. Professor Yanagita attached such great importance to the manuscript that she felt that if the manuscript were destroyed by a bomb while in her possession he would not forgive her. She never let the copy out of her sight and was so concerned that she even slept with it tied in her *obi* (belt). This foresightedness of the assistant actually saved the document. Her house was hit by a bomb, but she managed to get away with the manuscript in her *obi* before the building was completely destroyed. A little shack in the corner of her garden escaped the flames. She returned there and completed her work, living in the rubble left after the fire.

Although the times were very appropriate for reflecting upon death, the ancestors and after-life, one should not conclude that Yanagita was drawn to his subject merely through the tragic circumstances of the last months of the war. Indeed, the major part of his work was a quest into the origins of the gods of Japan. It is concerning this problem that he formulated his most original hypotheses and around them that he structured his collected materials. His theories have raised several controversies among Japanese scholars. Therefore, before pro-

ceeding to an analysis of *About Our Ancestors*, we will briefly locate Yanagita's theories in relation to other scholars who have proposed other solutions for the same problems.

Ancestor worship and the development of the group of linked households, called *dôzoku*,⁶ is of central importance for Yanagita's explanation of the origin of the gods. According to Yanagita, the core of the religious experience proper to the Japanese people consists of the veneration of the ancestors, even to the point that many other gods are nothing but disguised or forgotten ancestral spirits. The *Uji-gami*, the god of New Year, the field gods, the mountain gods, and the god of the sunken hearth etc. were thus all once ancestral spirits. Originally, so goes Yanagita's theory, in many local communities consisting exclusively of linked households, the ancestral spirits of the *dôzoku* were the sole object of veneration. But, gradually, with other families moving in, with whom no blood ties existed, the object of worship lost its ancestral character and the spirits started playing the role of protective deities of the locality. The few villages where the *Uji-gami* are still known to be the ancestors of one particular family, or where such ancestors are venerated not at the grave, but at the Shintô shrine, are thus interpreted as occupying a position close to the original situation.

There is one serious difficulty with this hypothesis. Scholars such as Tsuda Sôkichi argue that anything connected with death is immediately associated with pollution.⁷ It would therefore be unthinkable that the ancestors, who after all are dead spirits, could be venerated at a Shintô shrine. According to Tsuda—W. G. Aston held also the same opinion⁸—the origin of the worship of the deities at the shrines should be sought in nature worship. On the other hand, Lafcadio Hearn holds the same interpretation as Yanagita and stresses strongly the factor of ancestor worship.⁹

Yanagita, however, has an answer to the objection that associates pollution with ancestral spirits. He admits that the corpse and the spirit of the dead shortly after death inspire a sense of awe, fear and pollution. But dead spirits are not the same as ancestral spirits. The latter have been duly purified over the course of years and have therefore become spirits of quite a different nature. In other words, it is the

situation that defines a spirit as unclean or not, and not the mere fact of his being a spirit. Yanagita proves his point by the existence of the widespread practice of the double grave. In a first grave, situated in a remote place away from the living, the corpse is buried or, in ancient times, sometimes simply abandoned. But closer to the living a second grave is constructed and it is this grave that is frequently visited while the first one falls very quickly into oblivion. Ceremonies were even formerly held on this second grave. Nowadays, the four yearly official visits to the ancestors (at New Year, the *Bon*, the spring and autumn *Higan*) occur here. This illustrates that at the grave where the ancestral souls are venerated, there is no trace of fear for pollution.

Another argument is that several folk practices symbolize the purification process of the soul through which it joins the world of the ancestors. According to such a belief the souls climb the mountain at the foot of which the dead are often buried and in the process, which takes several decades, they are gradually purified till they become ancestral spirits when reaching the top. These ancestral spirits who thus were thought of as residing on the mountain top have then somehow lost their ancestral character while keeping their protective function. Thus they continued, as mountain gods, to watch over the welfare not only of their offspring but of the villagers below. Every spring these gods are ritually welcomed in the valley to reside in the fields, and they thus become gods of the fields. In autumn after the harvest, they again are accompanied back to the mountain. This periodical coming and going of the ancestors and the gods is a central structural element in Japanese agricultural rituals.

Another god who is welcomed every year is the god of the new year. Again Yanagita works out a very detailed hypothesis for the identification of this god with the ancestors. The argumentation is based upon the parallelism of the rites that occur at New Year's eve, when the god of the new year is welcomed, and the ceremony of welcoming the ancestors at the mid-summer festival of *Bon*.

It is clear that at each new conclusion Yanagita argues in the same way to induce the ancestral origin of deities, which are thought of nowadays as having no connection whatsoever with the souls of the

ancestors. The first part of the argument (and the most solid) establishes in a clear fashion the difference between dead souls and ancestral spirits. However, when it comes to proving the identity of the gods with the ancestral spirits, Yanagita assumes a lapse of memory in the minds of the people. At a certain point in the past, people who used to care so much about their ancestors somehow forgot they were worshipping the ancestors of the *dôzoku* they belonged to, and changed them into gods. There seems, however, to exist no compelling reason why the Japanese people, if they were capable in more modern times of worshipping ancestors and gods simultaneously, could not have done so in antiquity too.

It is now generally admitted that in the question of origins, proof and disproof are equally hard to establish. Problematic as Yanagita's evolutionary hypotheses may be, the reader will admit that they are tightly structured and contribute greatly to an understanding of the chaotic world of folk beliefs. In choosing this theoretical framework, Yanagita was undoubtedly led by his own sincere convictions and by evolutionary theories at the end of the nineteenth century.

Yama-miya-kô (Considerations on Mountain Shrines),¹⁰ published in 1947, is in several ways complementary to *About Our Ancestors*. In that work Yanagita studies the records concerning the old *Uji-gami* festivals of the two ancient priest clans that served the Grand Shrine of Ise, namely the Arakida and the Watarai families. Yanagita's analysis draws the attention to the striking similarity of the rites that are held at the mountain shrines and those that occur at the *Uji-gami* festival in the village. He then goes on to compare the parallelism of these rituals with numerous other instances where the festival of the mountain shrine is held once at the mountain shrine and once at the village shrine at the foot of the mountain. Yanagita interprets this dual festival in the framework of ancestor worship. The mountain is the resting place of the ancestral spirits and the god of the mountain is nothing else but a representation of the ancestral spirits. This interpretation is of course related to the burial practice in ancient times and to the particular idea of the other world that was expressed by this practice. This world and the other world were two continuous worlds for the ancient Japanese.

The dead did not leave for a far away place, but they stayed nearby and were actually part of the living world. (This problem is also treated, but from a different angle and with different supporting material, in *About Our Ancestors*, chapters 30, 66 and 67, and 72-74.) In *Yama-miya-kô* Yanagita then proceeds further to a reduction of the Amaterasu-Omikami (Sun goddess) to an ancestral deity. According to Yanagita, the sun goddess was originally not a nature deity, but the particular ancestress of the Imperial family. Here again he is opposed by other Shintô scholars.

The reader of *About Our Ancestors* may be astonished that one aspect, well known abroad, of Japanese ancestor worship, namely the cult around the Imperial dynasty, is not touched upon. The reason that Yanagita left this aspect out of his scope of investigation is probably that a treatment of "Emperor worship" comes down to a study of a cultural phenomenon that had been fostered and cultivated by a politically minded bureaucracy, and which had no deep roots in the folk belief of the common people, or in the family structure.

Let us now examine *About Our Ancestors*. A glance at the table of contents with its eighty-one short chapters, each no longer than a couple of pages, will leave one wondering about its structure. First some word of explanation about Yanagita's style is necessary.

Let us now examine *About Our Ancestors*. A glance at the table of Japanese. As Ishida Eiichirô notes about Yanagita's style, "...the almost embarrassing wealth of allusion and suggestion that lurks in each word and phrase, in each transition, occasionally gives rise to a certain difficulty in keeping pace with his thought." The work shows characteristics both of the scientific report and of the literary genre, much like the *emaki* (picture scroll) holds the middle between the tableau painting and the narrative strip. Scene after scene is sketched, each apparently of equal importance. They flow into each other without the sensible progress of a story. The demarcations between them are rarely marked in a clear fashion and the structure does not seem to extend beyond the couple of scenes the eye can cover at once. The eighty-one short chapters or essays follow each other in the same regular fashion, and together form a book that manifests more features

of a quiet entertaining conversation than the hierarchical structure of an academic dissertation. At a closer look though, it is possible to discover in this long "conversation" six themes, each treating a different problem of the Japanese ancestor cult: 1) the social aspects of the ancestor cult; 2) the original identity of the New Year celebrations and *Bon*; 3) the particulars of the ancestor ritual; 4) *Bon* festival; 5) the purification of the dead souls; 6) the Japanese idea of the other world.

The first four chapters can be considered an introduction to the book. Here a definition is given through concrete examples taken from history or personal experiences of what the term "ancestors" means. Yanagita does not limit the ancestors to merely those forbears that are linked by descent to each other and to the household venerating them. His concept of the ancestors is wider and is directly connected with the household, which very often includes non-kin as a result of the common practice of adoption. Therefore he defines the ancestors as all those souls that the household has the exclusive right and duty to venerate.

In a first group of essays (5-14) Yanagita starts with the examination of the social aspects of the ancestor cult. The viewpoint from which Japanese ancestor worship should be understood is the custom of inheritance and the connected phenomenon of the erection of branch houses (5-8). The all-important factor governing the customs of inheritance and branching-off is the availability of land (9-12). The oldest son normally succeeds the head of the household while the remaining sons establish branch houses. They are provided with a plot of land from the head family. However, in any given community there exists a saturation point beyond which the establishment of new branch houses is impossible. In that case, the sons leave the village and establish a farm in some other locality or start some other business.

For Yanagita, however, inheritance involves more than the transmission of real property. There is also an invisible legacy that is handed down to the next generation: the tradition of the house. For craftsmen this includes the whole body of skills and knowledge that is as vital for their livelihood as the land for the farmers. This spiritual dimension of the family legacy includes also the privilege of the oldest son who

alone is entitled to be the recipient of the family estate. But at the same time the heavy responsibility is incumbent upon him to see that the continuity of the house is assured. Both his privilege and responsibility are symbolically expressed through the special right he holds to care for the ancestor cult.

Most local communities in Japan consist predominantly of a limited number of interrelated main and branch families, *dôzoku* (13-14). They often form some kind of cooperative for mutual aid. The unity of such a group is expressed ritually through the performance of, and participation in, the festivals for the ancestors: all households venerate together the ancestors of the main family. In modern times, however, the cohesion of the *dôzoku* has lapsed considerably. The need for economic cooperation is not so pressing as before. The common rites also have fallen into disuse. Very often nothing is left of a *dôzoku* group but the consciousness of a main-branch family relationship. Each household then enjoys a greater autonomy and also venerates its own ancestors. That is to say, the oldest ancestors venerated in one household are the founders of the house, and thus no part is taken by the branch families in the rites of the main house. Yanagita deplors this trend of individualism because he attaches a great value to the preservation of the *dôzoku* and their spirit for the rebuilding of the nation.

In contemporary Japan, the greatest yearly celebration in honor of the ancestors occurs at the *Bon* festival in mid-summer. Then the ancestors come back and visit the home of their offspring for three days. But according to Yanagita there existed in the past another major occasion at which the people used to commemorate their ancestors, namely New Year. In essays 15 to 29 he presents all his arguments to prove the original identity of these two festivals.

A short linguistic analysis shows first that any holiday in Japan was originally a day of purification (15). (The reader will recall that the compatibility of purity and ancestors is central in the argumentation of Yanagita). In the next five chapters a detailed description is given of the customs around the celebration of New Year, the arrival of the god of the year and the building of the temporary shelf. The parallelism between *Bon* and New Year, the ancestors and the god of the year, is

clarified and Buddhism is held responsible for the present difference between Bon and New Year (21-23). Essays 24 to 29 prove how in former times there existed a genuine ancestor celebration, independent of the present Bon and New Year. The celebration even occurred at the Shintō shrines. In some areas of Japan, the sixteenth day of every month, the day after the full moon, was a special day for visiting the ancestral graves. Elsewhere, the sixteenth of the first, fifth and ninth lunar month were days of ritual purity. In the old province of Echigo (now, Niigata prefecture), a great festival for the ancestors was held during the fourth lunar month.

Chapter 30 formulates Yanagita's thesis of the identity of mountain gods and field gods, a theme he will take up again in chapters 66 and 67 and 72 to 74. With chapter 30 another series of essays starts. They study in detail the particulars of ceremonies connected with the ancestor cult: the offering of cooked rice to the ancestral spirits, the particular way of planting the chopsticks or the unusual shape of rice balls. Of special interest are his remarks on the significance of the use of water in the ritual because they illustrate clearly the keen perception with which Yanagita succeeded in capturing the sentiment of the Japanese people. From the analysis of these rites he switches, in chapters 37 to 42 to a linguistic study of the different terms used for souls and dead spirits.

Yanagita argues here also for a pre-Buddhist origin of the *butsudan* or ancestral family altar. "Butsudan" means literally "shelf of Buddha," but historically it was preceded by the native *tamadana*, a shelf (altar) for the souls. Buddhism succeeded only in giving this custom another form, not in changing its content. Nowadays in most Japanese households one finds a *butsudan*, not a *tamadana*. The *butsudan* holds ancestral tablets on which a posthumous name of the deceased is written. The practice of changing an individual's name was formerly a symbol of conversion to Buddhism. Presently the custom of giving a posthumous name has been generalized to all deceased.

The *Bon* festival constitutes another example where native customs and Buddhist beliefs have merged. In a fourth group of essays (43-50),

Yanagita continues his etymological investigations of the preceding chapters, this time in search for the origin of the *Bon* festival. There exists a Buddhist theory, based on the *Urabon* sutra, which Yanagita, as one might expect, rejects for his own folkloristic interpretation.

Buddhist scholars argue from the Chinese title of the sutra. This title, *Fo-shwo-yü-lân-phan-kin*¹² means literally, "The sutra spoken by Buddha on (offering) the vessel (of eatables to Buddha and the Sangha in behalf of the Pretas) that hangs in suspense." When Maudgalyâyana saw that his dead mother had become a preta (hungry spirit) he addressed himself to Buddha asking for means to save her; hence the sutra was Buddha's answer to that request. The three crucial characters of the Chinese title are "yü-lân-phan." The phrase "yü-lân" is generally understood as a transliteration of the Sanskrit Ullambana, the meaning of which is "to hang upside down" or "to be in suspense." At the same time "phan" (vessel) is explained as not being part of the transliteration. However, this character may have been used by the Chinese translator in both ways. On the one hand, it may stand for the last two syllables of Ullambana; on the other hand, it may mean the vessel of eatables to be offered to Buddha and the Sangha for the benefit of the souls being in Ullambana. According to this interpretation the festival of *Bon* (*Urabon* in Japanese, Ullambana) would have an Indian Buddhist origin.

Yanagita's explanation gives a Japanese origin to the *Bon*. He starts with the observation that the *Bon* festival in some cases is not called "Bon" but "hokai." From the Chinese characters used for writing *hokai*, no insight can be gained concerning the origin of *hokai*. In terms of action, however, *hokai* stresses more the principle of commensality than the regular festival (*matsuri*). A *hokai* consists mainly of the giving of food or of a whole meal, not to the gods, but to fellow men. Yanagita's hypothesis is that the term "bon" and "hokai" have a similar origin. Both originally indicated the plates upon which food was offered during the meals or ceremonies, but in the long run they indicated the festival itself during which the offerings were made. A similar case is presented with the word *hotoke*, meaning a dead man, written with the character for Buddha. *Hotoke* has really no connec-

tion with the belief in Buddha. *Hotoke* again meant the vessel used for the offerings made to the spirits of the dead, but the term was transferred to the spirits of the dead themselves.

Nowadays *Bon* is the festival of the reunion with the ancestors. There are, however, other visitors at *Bon*, and they are not welcome in the same way as the ancestors are. These homeless spirits, already mentioned in chapters 25, 39 and 40 are a great source of fear. In order to placate these intruders, they are offered food at a special place, separate from the ancestors. The concern with these homeless spirits has considerably changed the character of *Bon*. In chapters 50 and 52 Yanagita, in a rare effort to systematize, enumerates the change that have altered the celebration of *Bon*.

First, the growing importance given to the homeless spirits has somehow resulted in a weakening of the familial character of the festival. Second, the distinction between the new souls, still impure through their recent contact with death, and the purified ancestral souls has become stronger. Third, the recollection of the recently deceased, who have not yet been completely purified, has practically taken over the veneration of the more ancient ancestors. This change is due to the prolonging of the purification period over several decades. Chapter 51 explains how the final purification ceremony, the last memorial service, was set at the thirty-third year after death. The result has been that the former incompatibility of pollution and festivals has been broken since the focus of the *Bon* festival has shifted to the yet unpurified souls. Fourthly, a general confusion concerning the proper meaning of "ancestors" has resulted. Recently deceased have been indiscriminately treated together with the ancestors. This same confusion can be seen in the different ways the words *butsudan* (ancestral altar), *kamidana* (altar for the gods) and *mi-tamadana* (altar for the souls) are used.

The distinction between ancestors and recently deceased is very important to Yanagita. That the spirits of the ancestors could be venerated as gods is ultimately due to their being the purified spirits of the dead. This problem is discussed in chapters 53 to 61. The souls of the dead, on their way to ancestorhood gradually lose their individuality till they are taken up in the great anonymous body of the ancestor world

of a particular house. Buddhism, however, by introducing the custom of erecting tombstones and thus stressing and keeping alive the memory of each individual, has acted contrary to the Japanese religious sense.

Local traditions that illustrate unambiguously the incompatibility of ancestors and pollution are referred to extensively. Yanagita's interpretation of the custom of the double grave, as explained above, forms the cornerstone of his argument. In this part of his work, Yanagita also justifies his trust in what he calls the "unconscious tradition": the lyrics of children songs and the testimonies of old men and women many of whom, it should not be forgotten, were born before the Meiji restoration.

Finally in the last twenty chapters of the book (62-81), Yanagita discusses the image the Japanese have of the other world. Specific beliefs about the place of residence of the ancestors are compared and show the great familiarity the Japanese entertain with their dead (62-65). In chapter 64 Yanagita describes what according to him distinguishes the Japanese view of the other world. First of all, the souls of the departed are not believed to leave for a remote place. The Sect of the Pure Land taught the contrary, yet never succeeded in uprooting this native belief. The relationship between life and death is one of continuity, not one of absolute otherness. Secondly, in the absence of a clear border line between the two worlds, the intercourse with the beyond is frequent and common. The dead visit the living and the living communicate with them without fear. Thirdly, since death is not a terminal point in one's life cycle, there exists the firm belief that wishes and desires, unfulfilled at the moment of death, will be realized thereafter. Fourthly, the Japanese used to do some planning for the future of their offspring because they believed that they would be reborn a second and third time and, thus, be able to continue working at the same enterprise.

In chapters 66 and 67 reference is made again to mountain beliefs. Mountains, however, and not the only place where the nether world is localized in Japanese folklore. The border line that separates this world from the beyond is the object of many place names, legends connected with them, and sending-off rites. The rites that send the souls of the ancestors off to a far away land—they often occur at the seashore—are of recent origin since they contradict the typical Japanese feeling of

closeness with their dead (68-71). Traditional Japanese belief holds that the ancestors stay close enough to visit regularly their offspring (72-74).

There are yet other means than these periodical homecomings of the ancestors to establish contact with them. Such is the practice of necromancy. This is important for people who believe that the final wish of a man leaves some trace for a long time in the other world. A man can also die with some petitions left unfulfilled. A special custom removes the unfulfilled petitions of the dead person. Chapter 75 and 76 describe these practices.

A final point left for discussion is the belief in reincarnation. This dogma, part of the Buddhist creed and so full of moral implications, never found acceptance in Japanese folk belief. Sometimes, however, folk belief holds that the soul easily leaves the body of children and, that when they die, their soul is very soon reincarnated. Other customs point to a belief in the reincarnation of the soul of a grandfather in a grandchild. It is clear that belief in rebirth is only of secondary importance in Japan and that its formulation takes shape within the framework set by an ideology centered around the continuation of the household.

The reader who expects a systematic explanation of the belief in ancestors will probably be disappointed. One should bear in mind the intention of the author and the circumstances under which the work was written. Moreover, any further theoretical systematization on folk belief runs the risk of distorting its nature. Folk belief consists more of partly incongruent practices than of a well thought out system of beliefs.

The present work will in several ways contribute to a more complete understanding of Japan. First of all, the books that have dealt with ancestor worship as the religion of the household in Japan are very few. Mention has already been made of Hozumi Nobushige's legal study. The only other work in Japanese dedicated to the subject is a more recent study by Takeda Chôshû.¹³ He pays more attention to those aspects of Buddhist dogma that lend themselves to an accommodation

with native folk belief and folk practices. The present study of ancestor worship is furthermore a document that will introduce the reader to a certain tradition of Japanese scholarship that in its own particular way has been concerned with Japan's cultural identity, and that, inspired by a high civil concern, has always endeavored to put itself at the service of contemporary Japanese society.

About Our Ancestors has one more merit. Other works have sometimes generalized too boldly and applied too generously an ethic or worldview that, although truly Japanese, is really limited to only a small section of the population. The ethic of the way of the warrior or the world of *Zen* is not the whole of Japan. In the culture of the common folk other values and beliefs have a more prominent place. It is this "little tradition" that is pictured with so much warmth in the present work.

A tribute should be paid to the work of the translators. To translate a work of Yanagita Kunio is no easy enterprise. The decision of the translators to settle for a true representation rather than a literal translation is a happy one, for in this way the original spirit and atmosphere in which Yanagita wrote this work has been preserved.

November, 1968.

NOTES

- 1 Fanny Hagin Mayer (transl.); *Japanese Folk Tales* (Nippon no Mukashi-banashi, 1934), Tokyo: Tokyo News Service, 1954.
 ———: *Japanese Folk Tales, A Revised Selection* (Nippon no Mukashi-banashi, Kaitei-ban, 1960), Tokyo: Tokyo News Service, 1966.
 Charles S. Terry (transl.): *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era* (Meiji Taishô shi, 1930), Centenary Cultural Council Series, Vol. IV, Obunsha, 1957.
 George K. Brady (ed.), Masanori Takatsuka (transl.): *A Study in the Life of Mountain Villages* (Sanson seikatsu no kenkyû 1937), Kentucky Press Microcards Series A, Modern Language Series, No. 1, 1954.
 ———: *A Study in the Life of Fishing Villages* (Kaison seikatsu no kenkyû, 1949), Kentucky Press Microcards Series A, Modern Language Series, No. 2, 1954.
 ———: *Dictionary of Folklore* (Minzokugaku Jiten, 1951: compiled under the direction of Yanagita Kunio), Kentucky Press Microcards, Series A, Modern Language Series, No. 18, 1958.

For a short introduction into Yanagita's work, from the viewpoint of a social anthropologist, see Ishida Eiichi, "Unfinished but Enduring—Yanagita Kunio's Folklore Studies," in *Japan Quarterly* (1963), V, 1 (35-42).

- 2 Nitobe Inazō Ota (1862-1933) is the author of:
Bushidō, the Soul of Japan: an Exposition of Japanese Thought, New York: Putnam's sons, 1905.
The Japanese Nation; Its Land, Its People, and Its Life, With Special Consideration to its Relations with the United States, New York: Putnam's sons, 1912.
- 3 Yanagita refers with this term to his trilogy: *Yama-miya-kō* (Considerations on Mountain Shrines), *Uji-gami to Uji-ko* (The Uji-gami and the Uji-ko) and *Saijitsu-kō* (Festival days). These three works were published in 1947-48 but were actually partly written before the end of the Second World War.
- 4 Hozumi Nobushige: *Ancestor Worship and Japanese Law*, Tokyo: Maruya, 1901.
- 5 *Yanagita Kunio Shū* (Complete Works of Yanagita Kunio), Vol. 29, 304-309. Mention is made of this address by Nakamura Akira, *Yanagita Kunio no Shisō* (The Thought of Yanagita Kunio), Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku, 1967, p. 96.
- 6 Tsuda Sōkichi: *Nihon no Shintō* (Shintō of Japan) and *Jindai-shi no kami ni tsuite* (About the gods from the divine age), both in *Tsuda Sōkichi Zenshū* (The Complete Works of Tsuda Sōkichi), Vol. 9, pp. 235, 425. Quoted by Nakamura Akira: *Op. cit.*, 86, 94.
- 7 W. G. Aston: *Shintō: The Way of the Gods*, London: Longmans & Green, 1905, pp. 44ff., 177.
- 8 Lafcadio Hearn: *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1904, pp. 27ff., 121ff.
- 9 Concerning the structure and functions of the *dōzoku*, see Hori Ichirō: *Folk Religion in Japan, Continuity and Change*, edited by Joseph M. Kitagawa and Alan Miller, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, Chap. II, pp. 49-81. Richard K. Beardsley, John W. Hall, and Robert E. Ward: *Village Japan*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1959.
- 10 *Yanagita Kunio Shū* (Complete Works of Yanagita Kunio), Vol. 11.
- 11 Ishida Eiichirō. *Op. cit.*, 36.
- 12 Nanjō Catalogue No. 303 (Oxford, 1883).
- 13 Takeda Chōshū: *Sosen-sūhai: Minzoku to Rekishi* (Ancestor Worship: Its Folklore and History), Kyoto: Heirakuji, 1957.

The Author's Preface

I took up my pen early in April of this year and by the end of May I had finished writing this book, but due to various hitches in printing it has taken until now to publish it. From the start I had anticipated postwar readers, intending to write something that would be useful to them after peace was restored, but I certainly did not conceive of how conditions in society could change to the present extent. Even if I find nothing that should be rephrased, when I look over what I have written, I am aware of the marked change in my feeling now about what I wrote. Having had the experience of being far from making accurate inferences about our future, we must attach our hopes to future scholarship.

We may not be able to change the likelihood of people having to wait for a number of years before they can think over things quietly. If when the time comes for us to begin considering our problems, information related to them is scarce, what can be done? As I see it, the question of the family is related to plans for the after life, involving with it the concept of the soul as found in the common tradition of each country. Perhaps we can start now setting up theories of sorts, but I can not be content to follow the lead of compatriots who would disregard customs, good or bad, that have belonged to our common folk for a long time. What about the family? What is going to become of it and what should become of it? Above all, what do people at present ask the family to become? In order to settle such questions we must at least know some facts. Public figures since the time of the Meiji Restoration found such preliminary inquiries too much of a bother and did not concern themselves with these big problems. We could say that it would be hard to find another people like ours, who regardless of cultural levels has had to face its future with more vague, unconvincing, and arbitrary decisions. If present circumstances continue, there will suddenly be a great gap in our memory, for there are no written records about ordinary matters in the past, and

the path which would now lead to finding how things were then will have vanished. Even in the past changes occurred. The conduct and faith of a people change with times. There may be some people who doubt that we can pick up a present circumstance and recognize in it something that belongs to the past, but we can start now to search for old forms before they change. Fortunately, there are in cities and provinces far and near places where the old and new strata appear in the conduct of daily life. By weighing these many facts and comparing them, if only they have still been transmitted, we can see how they have changed. It is not the aim of Japanese folklore studies to offer any conclusions. It only wishes to gather and preserve as much basic information as possible so that people will not make the mistake of arriving at too hasty conclusions. Of course, failures in the past make a deep impression. Knowing those circumstances in detail would possibly induce the conclusion that it would be unprofitable to repeat the past. But we have not succeeded a single time when we deliberately closed our eyes to facts or started out by making light of them, taking foreign examples for a basis. This time of all times we must devise a system in society in accord with the nature of our people, something reliable, which will not be sacrificed through a reaction. Perhaps we can only be patient with the confusion of the times, but while we are admitting this, if we do not proceed with our search, I am afraid that all kinds of data will disappear or be scattered. Some may say our study has little influence, but at a time like this we carry out our task vigorously because we can not just stand by and bid farewell with empty sighs to these precious times.

There may well be some people who will be inclined to wonder what use there is for such a common-place book as ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS, but we have had a few serious motives in writing it. More than wanting to call these facts to the attention of several of our leaders and asking them to proceed after examining them, we want above all to give a new interest to young readers who have been influenced by their surroundings and who are one-sided in their information, young people who have never touched these questions. A second motive, we must confess, arises from the limitation of what we have

gathered so far. It is possible that there are many people in society whose memory of their childhood is on the verge of lapsing who will, with this slight stimulation, not only find pleasant recollections as they read these lines but will go a step further to inform the writer about what they recall. This volume, which intends to give an account of facts, may seem circuitous and too theoretical at times for reasons other than that it is written poorly. It is because we can not make a clear, exhaustive explanation of a single fact until we have arranged all reliable proof. The extremely unusual times we have just passed through have racked and stirred the lives of our citizens to their depths. Tragic, bitter, human events never seen or heard of before are daily cropping up in quiet corners of our land. Only fragmentary, one-sided stories were ever made known through the public press and such, and we could not travel around to inquire about them. There doubtless will be many among my readers who watched intently the underlying thoughts of our people suddenly coming up to the surface—thoughts about the after life, conceptions which they had been afraid to mention, the question of whether or not there was a soul, the feeling of the living for the departed, and such—revealing the fabric into which every thought and emotion of our people have been woven throughout a hundred generations.¹ I am hoping secretly that this book will arouse their interest. By showing you how our forefathers regarded their ancestors and how they thought of the future of their families, it does not follow that I am advising you to think in the same way. I simply want to confront the majority that is about to decide measures disregarding our inheritance accumulated during hundreds and thousands of years to replace them with something completely alien, and I want to make them admit these facts. If all sorts of measures are going to be enforced without any regard for facts because it is too troublesome otherwise, it will be like following blind leaders, and political affairs are not going to be any different than what we have had. There surely are many people who realize that our education that did not make men think and judge for themselves has been a big source of trouble. Many politicians, however, still think there are other means than study through which citizens can be enlightened. I am one who

advocates further learning, above all. When I review our long history, I find no period when men were as deficient as at present in their power to anticipate the future. We can expect this misfortune to continue in these postwar times. Exertion on the part of scholars is necessary in order to restore this power. Even though I would like to keep up with activities, in the face of sudden changes in this period, I find myself unprepared and weak, my years advanced, and my energy reduced. For these reasons I do not think there is much value in what I have written. I can only earnestly hope that from younger leaders there will be understanding and sympathy.

Yanagita Kunio
October 22, 1945

ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS

1 *Two kinds of meaning*

The word *senzo* [ancestor] is used with rather different meanings and represents divergent views. Separating people with these views into two groups, we find on the one hand those who know the word according to the way it is written. This sort usually thinks of just one founder of the family as the ancestor or one, at any rate, who lived and worked a long time ago. From the written word this is a reasonable enough explanation, and because a famous ancestor who lived long ago is frequently mentioned in ordinary conversation, an increasing number of people identify him as the ancestor whose name is recorded as the founder of their family lineage.

On the other hand, people who have heard the word since they were little and absorbed the attitude of their elders never explain the word *senzo* according to the way they later learned its written form and its usage. The biggest difference in this latter group is that people within it regard an ancestor as one who should be venerated, the soul of a person who would not be worshipped elsewhere than in his own family itself, and although few of them might express it as clearly as that, their attitude becomes apparent whenever they use the word. That is something I have noticed for a long time as I listened.

It happens that recently I had the experience of sitting in at the *nômin dôjô* [agricultural hall] at Uchihara, Ibaragi prefecture, with a group made up of about ten selected farmers as delegates from each prefecture, men who would be called serious farmers and all of them heads of old families. In answer to my question one who represented an old line said that his was the twentieth generation in his family, most of the others being the fifteenth or eighteenth generations, but one of them declared that there were sixty generations counted in his family.

Astonished, I inquired further and learned that the family had a detailed chart of its genealogy from Emperor Kammu. It may be correct to say that all the Taira families in Japan today are descendants of Kammu, but he was an Imperial ancestor, and other than the noble family in the direct line of emperors, none should count him in his genealogy and none should venerate him. That such confusion occurs occasionally is due to these two different meanings. As the use of writing continues to develop, the first of the two will come crowding in more and more forcefully, and actually it is a newer and simpler one. That is why, as a matter of principle, I want to put emphasis upon and try to explain the way many of our people think, the view of unlettered people which has been held from times unknown but not clearly expressed and into which, as times changed, mistakes may have unconsciously crept.

2 *A single illustration*

Families from the Fujiwara are far more numerous in our land than those from the Taira. Although it might be difficult to prove exactly, there may be as many as one hundred thousand or even a million of them. Because long ago many influential political figures appeared in this family, it is comparatively easy to identify the earlier families belonging to it. The Fujiwara are said to be descended from the *Kami*² Amenokoyane-no-mikoto, worshipped mainly at the great shrines of Kasuga in Nara and Hiraoka in Kawachi, as well as at other shrines in various regions which were dedicated to that deity. However, that deity is not usually said to be the ancestor of the Fujiwara family, and I have, moreover, never heard of a single family that venerates as an ancestor the famous Kamatari, upon whom the name Fujiwara was first bestowed and who was really the founder of all Fujiwara families. That is because the Kamatari family was divided among the four sons of his grandson and it was not decided which of them would be the head of the *honke* [main family]. Among those in the northern Fujiwara family, the descendants of Fusasaki prospered and from this

ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS

one northern line many branch families were established and their founders and descendants were all worshipped as ancestors.

In a book called *Sompi bunmyaku* this point is covered in detail, showing that among the Fujiwara families those belonging to the Yamakage and Uona lines were especially numerous in the rural districts of Kantô. My family happens to have a distant connection with the Uona line, so I can furnish an actual example. The Hidesato branch to which the Yanagita family is connected was an especially powerful and numerous family of the Uona line of which Tawara Tôda Hidesato, who attacked and destroyed Taira-no-Masakado, is the ancestor, but it has been long since the whereabouts of the *honke* was known or whether Hidesato is venerated there. Some people call the Hidesato line the Satô line, which came from the Fujiwara family that prospered in Hiraizumi in Oshû for three generations, there being many old families with the name Satô in Tôhoku and Kantô, but there are other families aside from the Satô line which are from the Tawara Tôda Hidesato family. Families of the Hidesato line are, on the whole, numerous in southern Tochigi and western Kanagawa prefectures—among the former, the Ashikaga (Tawara), Sano, Oyama, Yûki, and Naganuma and among the latter, the Hatano from whom the Matsuda and Kawamura lines came, and eventually all their main families were *daimyô* [feudal lords] of the Kamakura period. It is said that my Yanagita family was a branch from the Kawamura. This certainly was not from the main family, for after it had moved to Tochigi, there were scores of old families of the same name, some of which branched off and emigrated to Gumma, some branches going further west and settling in northern Shinshû. The ancestor which my family venerates is not Tawara Tôda Hidesato, of course, nor the ones who started the Hatano, Matsuda, or Kawamura lines, nor the first Yanagita who set up a family from the Kawamura line. Here then are illustrated the two explanations of *senzo*, for one group calls its ancestor Fujiwara Uona or Hidesato, and the other, with which I join, respectfully venerates as ancestor Yanagita Kenmotsu, a relatively unknown man, and each family head and his wife of the generations following him. Even if the same word *senzo* is used, there are completely different attitudes towards it.

3 *The founder of one family*

I would like to discuss my family a little further but not because of any feeling of pride. This Yanagita Kenmotsu was a man of the latter part of the Sengoku³ period and by the start of the *bakufu* [Shogunate] in Edo he was already an old man. He had worked under the feudal lord of Utsunomiya and it is recorded that he was given the name Kenmotsu as a reward for a meritorious deed, his former name having been Hikobei. The Utsunomiya family was hated by Hideyoshi, so when it lost its domain, Kenmotsu may have been imprisoned, but later he retired to a place called Mōka in the same region. He may have planned for a time to live by farming. There is an old family named Yanagita even now in Mōka. My family may have come from the second or third son of that original line, but there is no tradition about that. There was among the sons of Kenmotsu Hikobei one called Yohei, who was a capable young man. At Mōka in those days there was an official named Hori, a military man in the ranks of the *bakufu*, who had the good fortune of being promoted to be *daimyō*, and about the time he was made feudal lord of Karasuyama, an establishment worth well over 10,000 *koku*⁴ a year, Yohei applied for military service a second time. He started at the lowest rank of *samurai* [warrior], but he was promoted little by little, working for the chief official of Repair and Construction and then for the official of the Feudal Lord's Banners, until his services were rewarded to the extent of an annual income of almost 100 *koku*. That was how this Yanagita Yohei came to be the founder of my family. By then Kenmotsu had retired and did not seem to have been numbered in the total line of our ancestors, but as the most important member of the family, the anniversary of his death and his posthumous name are written faithfully on the grave stone, the family register at the temple, and set upon the *Senzo-dana* [ancestral altar] of our family. In other words, it is an accepted fact that at *Bon*⁵ each year he is one of the ancestors who returns to our family, one of the *Hotoke Sama* [family deities].⁶ This custom among families spread throughout the land and seems to be practiced even now, expanded in some places to worship the father of the main family at the new

bunke [branch family] established by a second son even though the father did not go to the branch family with its new head. Thus, for the father of the family which founded the branch family there were two *ihai* [ancestral tablet] provided, permitting him to be worshipped at the *bunke*, too, but that was not the old way of thinking, for originally only the man who after retirement accompanied his second son into the branch family could be considered an ancestor of that family.

A man's wish to be venerated after death was universal. Those who would be descendants knew this well and did not have to make a distinction between ancestors they should worship and those they could omit from worship. But it was a fixed duty to carry out rites for ancestors, not everybody at every place being permitted to do so. To put it more precisely, this was not only the duty of the descendant but the right of the family head and his wife in the direct line of descent, so as in the example of my family, even if we know the name of the ancestor of the head family, we do not worship him. In this respect ancestor worship clearly differs from the worship of famous men deified at shrines in various places.

4 *Becoming an ancestor*

I have already said that there is a considerable gap between the popular meaning of *senzo* and what is in the minds of men who acquired modern learning, and a handy example of this is found in the use of the phrase *Go-senzo ni naru* [becoming an ancestor]. When I was a child this term was used often, perhaps because it gave a vivid impression, and I heard it even from scholarly persons. For example, there would be a capable, healthy, bright-eyed youngster who was intelligent, but not the one, however, designated to inherit the family line, and those around would encourage him by telling him, without any thought of his death, to put his efforts into learning in order to become an ancestor instead of telling him to grow up quickly into a fine man. As many parents grew older, they would think of the future of their youngest son, declaring that he had good possibilities, and they would comfort him

and brace him up with the remark that he could very well become an ancestor. That meant he was surely a talented youth capable of becoming the founder of a new family that would prosper a long time, as in the case of Yohei in our family. To tell the truth, half of the newly raised peerages during the Meiji era were from this kind of men.

It has been a long time since there was an occasion for me to hear the phrase, but recently I ran across a man, by chance, who said himself that he was going to become an ancestor. It was when I was on my weekly stroll around the hills of Minamitama-gun that I struck up a conversation, while waiting for a bus, with a man about my age named Rikugawa, who lives in Haramachida. With his long flowing white beard he was an unusual looking person wearing a newly dyed short coat on which was printed his place of business and wearing long rubber boots, and he kept saying he intended to become an ancestor. He had been born near Takada in Echigo, but he went to his mother's birth place in Shinshû to learn carpentry. A short time before he had to do military service, he had come to Tokyo, and being rather capable, he succeeded quite well after the age of forty. Then he changed to contracting and dealing in lumber and lived comfortably from the houses he built and owned. He had six sons, some of which were in military service, but most of them settled, and he could give each a house. He had been able to care for his mother pleasantly to the end and had arranged a fitting grave site. He had no desire to move elsewhere. With exceptional cheerfulness he declared he would become the ancestor of six newly established families. His wish to establish six new families and have them venerate him as their ancestor may have been slightly different from the desire of an ancestor of long ago, but that he included arrangements to be perpetuated even for his descendants and that he had no wish for further blessings impressed me as an old-time, serene aim, one unusual for these days.

5 Inheritance and two kinds of branch families

Japan's system of inheritance has continued over three hundred years,

divided between strengthening the family stock through primogeniture and providing property for the happiness of each child through dividing the inheritance, and as in the heart of old Rikugawa, the two principles conflicted and compromised as time passed. The result has been an unprecedented history built into our progress at home and abroad. The efforts and hardships of the ancestors of our people were painful and profound. The question now is whether it was a just system and whether in the future there is a possibility of inventing a more nearly complete system. That this is a big problem goes without saying, but this book is not a suitable place to consider and discuss it thoroughly. All that I can do is to make the facts clear and it is necessary to call them to the attention of descendants who are about to forget how their ancestors worked for the system from the time of Edo, and it is especially necessary to show that there were two kinds of *bunke*, which are now about to be made into one.

Giving the family strength was done by increasing the authority of the oldest child. Stating it more completely, I would have to say that a life incomparably poorer than that of their eldest brother had to be accepted by the second son and those younger. The decline of the family was hastened most of all through the decrease in production which could support many members in a household—a condition we might call undernourishment today. The army of that day, as everybody knows, was not organized from recruits from all over. Usually each man who owned property or his representative would hurriedly lead able men from his establishment when there was a call for military service, but if before he realized it, his home became short of hands, he could not manage. Thus, from merely political and strategic necessities the system of creating branch families had to be controlled. Once peace was restored, this was not a problem, and officials who levied service directly from each family encouraged an increase in the number of households, but the family itself was under pressure of old customs, and for other reasons it was not ready to divide its rice fields unless all conditions appeared to be favorable. A big consideration was that if the branch families were created, attendance at annual *matsuri*⁷ and anniversary services for the dead would fall off at the main family,

making it difficult to maintain its long established status. Even if a parent were willing to lessen the celebration because of love for his youngest child, he would not feel it was doing right by his ancestors. Outsiders, too, were apt to keep an eye upon such matters, and if the least former practice were omitted, gossip about this or that would circulate. A feeling of grief would germinate from such circumstances in the family, so old, substantial homes would take great pains when considering the problem of a branch family.

6 *Inkyo and heya branch families*

Tawake [*ta* rice field, *wake* divide] was used as another word for fool and it was explained humourously by saying that it was foolish to divide a rice field. Even when the increase in the number of families was promoted, there was still in some regions an ordinance to the effect that a farmhouse could not be built unless there would be a crop of ten *koku* or more. The real problem did not concern such small farmers but the ones that had enough fields to divide inheritance several times. While it became common among them to divide the family estate partly due to mutual concerns, there were old-style, simple hearted villagers in the mountains in various regions in the country who by mutual consent would not permit branch families to be created. The village of Shirakawa in Hida has been noted for this from early times, and in other places in the district there were troublesome restrictions which did not permit a branch house to be set up unless it was a little branch shop to carry on trade at the roadside or a small house only for retired parents. An old couple who gave up their house to their son retired to a separate home as long as they both were in good health, but when one of them died, the other would return to the former house. Gradually the custom changed, and upon occasion parents retired with a second son or younger to a piece of property that seemed suitable and lived apart with no intention of returning the property to the main family, leaving it, instead, entirely to the second son, and then they would proceed to retire with a third or younger son. In some regions the word *inkyō*

[retirement] was used for the second son, and *sankyo* [*san* meaning three] for the third son. That is, the word *inkyō* designated a son with whom the parents retired, and there could be an *inkyō* who was as young as an elementary school boy. That may be a bit extreme, but in many places the word *inkyō* for retirement became the designation of *bunke* in standard language, and frequently nobody bothered to inquire whether old people were living there or not. The term *inkyō* then is a vestige of times when a branch family was not permitted for other than retirement.

There are also many regions where branch families were called *heya*, the reason being very close to retirement. From terms such as *miso-beya* [a shed where *miso*—bean paste—is stored], *kibeya* [a shed where wood is stored], and such it can be seen that the *heya* were formerly detached buildings belonging to the main house and set up on the same grounds. As the result of the invention of *shōji* and *fusuma* [sliding doors], which were used to partition small rooms called *heya* in the main house, those who slept in the small rooms except the head of the family and his wife were called *heyazumi* [room dwellers]. If the household were too numerous, it could not all bed down under a single roof. Then several small houses or a long house was built for some to occupy, and finally the *heya* were set up outside for those who had wives, thus confusion occurred between reference to those *heya* and the houses of true branch families. At present there are no differences between these two kinds of branch families except those of old and new or of small and big, but if one observes carefully, he can see evidence of a slight difference in sentiment about them. The plan of the old branch family is on the whole small. Judging from the layout and structure of its house we can see that it was so from the start. Not only serfs and men in the service of the family were given houses to live in, but those of family blood, such as uncles and younger brothers, had only little houses adjoining the main family. They could hardly be called adjoining houses, either, because they were not completely independent, for the families participated in the community life of the main house of family, using their little houses principally as places to sleep, and the whole family was a single household otherwise. These were different from the big

new branch houses of recent years, erected from the start as something separate, in which a different ancestral altar was placed, only this latter kind of branch family celebrating rites for its own ancestors.

7 *Differences between the present and the past*

Heya and *inkyō* were at first something different from *bunke*. Even if people remained in their houses to rest on rainy days, rising, sleeping, or taking their meals there, all hands formerly gathered in the main room of the head family on a feast day or for a fixed celebration, at the time to plant rice and other products, at harvest, of course, and at times when *miso* was made or pickles were packed away, or when any activity was on a large scale, and they worked together and sat down to eat as one family in the ample quarters furnished by the main room. There would be a large cooking stove built in the *niwa*, the dirt-floored workroom in the main house, where *mochi* [glutinous rice] was steamed and pounded, for only at the main family were there utensils and facilities for work requiring many hands. In other words, even if the houses were scattered around, they were like petals of a flower with a center and not independent units with the means of making a living, which may be considered a characteristic form of the large family system in our land. As society changed, these small houses were recognized both from outside and within the family as something individual, a view growing clearer that no matter how small, a house was a house, bringing with it good points as well as weak ones. Plowing and independent family work were expanded as much as possible and so was contracting to hire out by the day or leasing land from the main family on equal terms, the smaller units assuming the appearance of a new family, while at the same time former customs depending upon the main family were gradually abbreviated and others neglected, all of which was unavoidable. Since the accumulated experience of generations of ancestors, abstract customs without any spoken or written word of instruction, among them how to regard ancestors or the aim of becoming a good ancestor, were associated with death, they were not

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usually mentioned before old people, with the consequence that such customs only tended to be empty practices. A marked change in feeling appeared between the newly recognized branch families of recent years and the old branch families, which was well enough as long as the latter were simply regarded as old-fashioned or set in their ways, but when they were considered too severe or relics of an old bad habit, the old lost out to the new because of its number and strength. This is a situation that arose after peace had continued for some time in the Edo period and is by no means one that grew up in the new Meiji era after various foreign cultures had entered our land.

If you want to say to which side I belong, you can call me one of those who advocates reform. I have never once thought that if the present life of Japanese continued, it would be well. If society is to improve, I have thought we should always plan, set up programs, and investigate so it can be better than in the past even if it does not change outwardly. Some things in the past were right and, of course, it is desirable that we return to them. But in order to decide that, there are things in the past which we must understand. It may be that a number of things are not known today or that people who once knew them are forgetting them. Whether the facts will furnish valuable sources of reference is a good question for young scholars who appear hereafter to decide. At any rate, it is not good for people to be ignorant concerning facts. I think I must reduce the number of facts that are not known.

8 *The concern of ancestors*

As with the former example of the Fujiwara family lines, if even a family said to be quite old in an outlying district is traced back to the time it was established, it will be found that it is from a branch family of that day, from one like that created by the old man in Minamitama-gun who intended to become an ancestor. Among all the Gempei and Tōkitsu lines,⁸ there can not be found any which should be called head families except for a few scattered families in charge

of the well-known shrines, which are said to be in direct line of descent from the *Kami-yo* [Age of Kami]. I once thought that a family, like the body of a man, has what we could call a natural span of life, a law by which an old one dies out and a new one remains, and when I looked into the old history of our land, I found several periods like that of Sengoku in which very old, powerful families disappeared. We can not deny that to people who were concerned about prolonging the existence of their family these events furnished valuable lessons. Parents and children joined their intentions not to put a strain upon the main family, not to let it weaken, and if a new branch family were to be set up, we can think that the step was carried out with a plan for it, also, to prosper. It was far more difficult to find a chance to set up a new family except *heya* or *inkyō* within a single village. That is why many branch families in the past were established outside the village and sometimes at surprisingly distant places.

Arable land was in principle safest property. There were many places which could conceive of no other foundation for a plan of living. Among them the farmer-developer, the man who turned the wilderness into gardens with his own strength, could continue to live well under good conditions without working too much, and even a tenant farmer who paid the usual land tax could feel easy about food and clothing if he were willing enough to work, and he could bring up his children in security. That is why from old times there was a common feeling among the upper and lower classes that land should be left to the family, and it is rooted deeply even today.

The love of such people for their children made them seem to endure great hardship. What the ancestor had bequeathed belonged to the main family. A man was not content to see his family weakened by its property being sliced off. Because they had a number of children, many men felt compelled to work until their backs were stooped, spading their fields and hills to open land for their second son or younger. This would at least increase the property for their generation. So they thought and believed that nobody would complain if they gave it to their children, and they carried out various other schemes for them until they were really old, without just plunging into old

age and letting matters go. It is not unreasonable that under such circumstances farmers were frequently engaged in some business to a surprising extent, although they were often unsuccessful.

9 *Examples of prosperous military families*

Even in medieval times⁹ when general rules about inheritance by the oldest child were firmly established, parents had already started to struggle, as I have described, on behalf of their second and other sons. There is an old book called *Musashi shichitô keizu* [the lineage of seven families of present Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Saitama] in which fairly detailed lineages are given, showing that some powerful military leaders who lived long were able to set up three or four branch families. Most of the family heads, while they were still in good health, turned over their homes to their oldest son when they arranged his marriage, then usually taking along a group of young attendants to serve them, they retired to uncultivated land a little apart to set about breaking soil or they took over fields they already controlled and set them up as separate property to establish a home for a second, third, or younger son. It was not unusual for a different family name to be given each son in such a family, including some adopted son not of family blood, this latter probably being one married to a daughter. The Shichitô were seven independent lines of powerful families, practicing intermarriage and mutual assistance, but it seems that they did not mark off their land at first because of priority given to the one who opened it up. Gradually they expanded to places distant from the main family. It was because there was still considerable underdeveloped land in Kantô in medieval days; in other words, the rapid increase in population in this region and the early development of the rural districts were the result of great parental love, which is no less now.

Surplus of vacant land for such use could not continue forever. Presently all desirable land became attached to some family estate, and since any excess of cultivated land would furnish additional income, desperate struggles ensued over one foot or one inch differences in

ing within had something more implied than the character *eru* 得る [to gain], so they used the characters *katoku* 家督 to express the *toku* of each family as it is written in the present civil law, but no matter how we look at it, the character for *toku* 督 makes no sense. Some people think that *toku* came from the word *toku* 徳, which was put into terms such as *fukutoku* 福德 [good fortune], *toku o suru* 徳をする [to gain an advantage], and *o-tokuyô* 御徳用 [more for the money], but the original meaning of the Chinese character is considerably different, and that is simply another instance of the phonetic use of a character by Japanese. The question then arises over what term was used for transmittance of property through inheritance prior to the use of *toku* or *katoku*, but since none has been found, there probably was none. About the time several families began to branch off, not only in Kyoto but in the provinces, about the time the big family system began to disintegrate, there was no way of settling matters without such a word as *katoku*.

11 The importance of *katoku*

Since the use of the word *katoku* is convenient, let us proceed with it. At present the word *bunke* is accepted in a broad sense as meaning the family that separated from the main family, using it literally as it is written and explained freely in that sense, but originally we can think that there was a clear distinction between the branch family with *katoku* received from the *honke* and a branch family called *betsu-honke* [different main family], which had accumulated property through its own efforts. I can offer an actual example illustrating this from one close to me. Six generations ago the head of the Matsuoka family, into which I was born, was a struggling physician. One of his younger sisters married into a family in a village nearby, but she returned to live and die in her former home. Her only son came home with her, and instead of becoming a doctor, he hired himself out to a local merchant, worked hard and accumulated savings with which he built a house near his mother's village, and he started his own business. He succeeded quite well and during his lifetime he amassed considerable wealth,

setting up each of his four or five sons and daughters in branch families and deliberately having them call his own household their *honke*. He never referred to his Uncle Matsuoka's family as *honke* although his uncle was still alive. That may not seem surprising at present, for there was not a penny's worth of family property to be divided and he had no sense of the duty of a branch family of that day. Views change and, especially in towns which expanded, times made it possible to set up a number of occupations, and men came naturally to be recognized as family founders through their own efforts—and their number should increase—but present views and laws include these, also, as branch families without recognizing any difference. Any newly successful man today who has received an intangible, invisible inheritance such as health or his disposition transmitted through his parents from his ancestors considers his upbringing and education as greater assets in his success than an acre or two of land, and he maintains a strong attachment to the family from which they came. Consciousness of this invisible inheritance was a favorable starting point for broadening the sphere to which the old established custom was applied, but the fact is that this new idea has been the basis for a change in the character of the branch family in our land. The connection of *katoku* with the main family still remains although many of the families live independently in distant places, while their sense of freedom spreads even over the relation between the main family and to the branch families clustered around it, causing a greater indifference to their relationships. I am inclined to think with others that at the bottom of the former courteous affection felt for ancestors was a concern in each man about becoming an ancestor himself. Concern over protecting descendants after one's death, over plans insuring long continuance of the family, was actually represented in the system of inheritance of *katoku*. I am worried over the one-sidedness of many who do not arrive at this conclusion. As the economic system of our country develops, *katoku* no longer needs to refer to land. It is far more beneficial to the continuance of the family to know as many facts as possible about the close relationship between ancestor and descendant than to receive tangible property, which is frequently exposed to danger of loss. To call it intangible *katoku* is

hard for people to understand at present, but from now I want to discuss mainly facts concerning it which have been overlooked.

12 *The family tradition*

Farmers who make up a great part of our people explain the word *katoku* even now in the same way as *fudôsan* [real property] and use it that way at times, but we can not say with accuracy that *katoku* and *fudôsan* are exactly the same, for the former involves a formless something. A suitable word which would express it concisely has not been produced yet, but perhaps as we consider the problem one may presently be made. Among merchants there is something more or less concrete and appraisable designated by such terms as *noren* [hallmark], *tokui* [patron], or *shinyô* [credit], but for farmers concern about things still more deeply rooted are expressed only marginally by some words, a fact that shows how our language has been left to take its natural course. We must give this more thought.

The word *dentô* [tradition] is used at present to express the invisible legacy, but it gives one the feeling that there is only a passive way of thinking about it. Here we treat it as something more than that, something learned, actually practiced and transmitted, worked with and shown, taught and made to be memorized, something that is handed down to the next generation from what can be ascertained by the ear and eye or something outwardly manifest. This tradition may not be the central idea of *katoku*, but it seems to be something forming the base for that core and embracing it. In medieval times people who were called *shodô* [men of various skills] and *shokunin* [craftsmen], who earned their bread by other than farming, regarded their skills and crafts and the use of these to society as the core of their *katoku*, and there was a special initiation practiced, based upon oral and family tradition. This tradition was regarded as a substitute for visible property, such as land, a view held by merchants, as well, in the day when capital or money did not have much power. In the eyes of the farmer the man of official rank was the most important among those men

who lived without cultivating rice. As long as that rank was inherited, it was really a splendid *katoku*. In earlier times men in the upper ranks of governmental service held land, and even if they did not dig and weed, that they lived on the profit of their land made them like farmers, but later the number of men receiving feudal benefices or stipends increased to where one could hold a station according to his duties, such as becoming an official or scholar, and by means of that he could establish a new, completely independent family. In these families certain purposes of successors were added to the traditional skills or knowledge handed down through generations and these were also accepted by the descendants. In this meaning the *kamon* [family line] was a vertical union throughout successive generations.

13 *Maki and shinrui*

Since my discussion has lengthened, I will restate the matter briefly by saying that a branch family arose in a different place and had different work, and because it did not follow the control of the main family, after a few generations it became an independent, different family. The family whose founder established it through his own efforts was, of course, recognized as an independent one. On the contrary, setting up a new family by dividing the *katoku* of the main family, regardless of the amount, among people of the same profession and in the same place was a later custom. Briefly speaking, we can say that it was a development during the collapse of the big family system. Of course, there were circumstances that brought it about, half of them due to reform in the economic organization outside the family, but there were the wisdom, effort, and wise planning over property on the part of the head of the family. The word *bunke* and the term for dividing the family property became popular in its use since the *bunke* system was recognized, but even in that there were two kinds or trends, continuing even today, for there was one in which the main family was the center of the union for those who had retired or branched off and could not be independent, and there was another

for the branch families who lived apart or took up different work and had the power to be independent of the main family. Nowadays the conditions for producing these two kinds of branch families are overlooked and matters are settled according to written terms, with cross demands upon each occasion, until the plans of ancestors are frequently blocked, making it rather difficult to clarify the functions of both types of families. The word crisis may be a bit strong, but if we do not give this more recognition now, I am concerned over the possibility of difficulties ahead.

From long ago Japan was a country with many small farms. Having many children in the family to increase it and to bring prosperity were in a sense a natural pleasure, but it did not always proceed according to plan. Families who had few relatives, and little strength for that reason, were anxious about the future, so it was natural to help each other and statesmen encouraged it. In Kôshû and Shinshû I have often heard the term *aiji* [joint property] or *jirui* [a property owning group] for a group of families, not referring to blood relatives but to groups having ties, and in Kantô there were groups of families within a single village called *mura-miuchi* [relatives within the village], in which families of different lineage associate with each other as *shinrui* [relatives], and while this was not found everywhere, it would seem that in general mutual assistance had started among those who had recognized their relationship for many generations. Although they were not recognized as relatives under civil law in the Meiji era and they themselves did not know how they were related, they maintained an intimacy as families with the same name, inviting or being invited to various events, having customs of exchanging visits, frequently found even now, and I have heard from them that such relatives were regarded with esteem and called *omo-shinrui* [important relatives]. People conscious of their family are particularly precise in mentioning the family from which their ancestor came and no matter how far away they are from it, they always feel a duty toward it. Formerly families of the same kinship group who lived in distant domains and had no chance to be acquainted with mutual relatives still continued to exchange correspondence and they even sought ways to reestablish and strengthen their connection. As

our people go abroad in great numbers in the future, I do not hesitate to say this first kind of tie will need to be improved and even strengthened. There certainly are many matters concerning this which people setting out now should investigate, but those who remain in the village to live, who have divided the single *katoku* and have lived in a community depending upon the unity of their family must be considered as a different sort. The former do not go beyond questions over a single family, but the latter are the problem of society as a whole, beyond a discussion of gain or loss, and these matters make up village life, so that disregarding them leads to a reorganization of the community. It is rather late, for changes are already setting in, but part of the old things remain. We can not refrain from clarifying this problem even as simple history.

14 *The unity of maki ties*

Families with the same name can be seen clustering into a certain area even now. Even family names such as Kobayashi, Takahashi, Tanaka, and Satô have a conspicuous inclination in their distribution, and in general we can find a name in a single region which is not found elsewhere. It is not difficult to guess the place of a man's birth when hearing his name, but we seldom run across two people with the same name who say they are relatives. It is because the number of relatives is limited although there are a great many families with the same name, and usually, if asked, they answer that perhaps they were related with each other in the past, but they no longer associate or, more often, they say there is no connection between them. At present even those related by marriage are included among relatives. Excluding those who have intimate ties through marriage, I am going to explain the few remaining groups of families connected from old times. Actually, the distant relative from which the family came is not included in this group, neither are those who have associated as relatives for special reasons, but on the other hand there are in the same group several families connected through other than blood ties, but these exceptions

have not changed the real nature of the associated group. In old writings this group is called *ichimon*, which has been replaced at present by the term *ikke* [one family], used very widely, so probably one of these is the standard word for it. In the west there are the terms *ittô* [one lineage], *ichirui* or *yauchi* [within a house], or *kuruwa* [circle], all with similar feeling. In Chûbu and east of Tokyo the word used is *maki* [enclosure]. There is nothing obscure in the word *maki*, and we consider it an old, good word, so we have decided to use it. For convenience we are using the character for *maki* 巻 in our discussion. There are places where a distinction is made between a greater *maki* and a smaller one, but the former seems to be more superficial. In the smaller *maki*, especially the one which has a definite center in it, we can see a strong tie still existing today. In this case, however, the general affairs of the head family are not too complicated at present, and control by the main family, as well as reliance upon it, has become more moderate than in the past, allowing each household to carry out better plans for its own future, but besides the usual neighborly, close intercourse among them, there are several mutual duties which they have carried on from old times. I think we must investigate as many of these practices as possible to learn why the *maki* and *ikke* should be continued now. There are two matters I wish to take up in this book, the first being the annual observance surrounding the beginning of New Year and the second being the custom of gathering at the *senzo-matsuri* [ancestral festival], and I suspect that both observances represent two sides of a fundamentally single rite. We can not say this for sure yet, but scholars have a deep interest in it. At any rate, we can outline the question clearly and at the same time we can find a way to what our ancestors included in their idea of *senzo*.

15 *Congratulatory observances*

Now we will take up the question of the origin of *Bon* and *Shôgatsu* [New Year], the most important observances in our land. Many people may recognize the former as only the time to worship their ancestors and

New Year as just a time to celebrate or to offer congratulations. Or they may think that the difference between the two is that *Bon* is a time connected with a Buddhist priest, who handles matters of death, and *Shôgatsu* is the time when no priest is welcome to pass under the *shimenawa* [sacred rope] until the 4th Day, which is a recent custom, however, and we can not arrive at immediate conclusions until we have examined facts more carefully. Only part of the families, those who had had bereavement, were sad at *Bon* in the first and second year following, but others who had had no sadness and whose parents were in good health considered it an auspicious time. Even now people come to call at *Bon* to offer congratulations in the country. A change has come in the use of the word *iwau* 祝ふ [celebrate], its original meaning having been the purification of the body and mind to prepare fittingly to carry out a *matsuri* for *Kami*, which can be seen through the use of the word in writings. Formerly the character *iwau* 齋ふ [abstinence] was written and preparation for the *matsuri* at the Shintô shrine was also an *iwai* いはい [abstinence]. Men who took part in *matsuri* restrained themselves, did not touch ritually impure things, and kept in a quiet, calm condition, which was the *iwai*, and congratulations were offered to the one who observed this discipline. That is why both at *Bon* and New Year parents admonish children not to cry or fight or get into mischief for which they might get scolded, and those whose parents are alive deliberately eat fish to show it is not a time of *shôjin* [Buddhist abstinence from flesh]. The only difference at New Year is that since it comes at the start of a year, there is special joy over having added another year safely and a hope for the same happy life in the new one, and this desire has developed since medieval times into the selfish prayer for an increase in prosperity, but we exchange New Year greetings still with a wish for the other's safety and continued health in the New Year.

Exchanging mutual greetings at New Year was not a general custom before the Meiji era. The custom of celebrating New Year's Day as an important ceremonial day for military men in feudal times, a day to go to offer congratulations to the chief's house, seems to have developed from the original form of the celebration at each house, and it is

not likely to have been an imitation of the ceremony attended at the Imperial Court on the first day of the New Year; at any rate, those military chiefs made this congratulatory day a fitting occasion for retainers and followers to gather before them to express their loyalty. The word *kerai* [retainer] was frequently written *karei* 家礼 [house observance] in Kyoto. It meant that even if people did not belong to the same family and clan, they kept observances in the same manner as the main family at New Year and other ceremonial times. This family observance at New Year was gradually expanded and eventually turned into the general custom of exchanging New Year cards among colleagues, acquaintances, and even those who had met only once or twice. Although it is not clear just when it came about, it was certainly a great change when New Year came to be an important occasion for special intercourse among people of different clans, for originally New Year as well as *Bon* was the day when people enjoyed welcoming their own ancestors at home. I want to try to explain this in a little more detail.

16 *Greeting the New Year*

Exchanging calling cards at New Year has become popular even in rural villages and for an official it seems to be requisite, but in many places making calls on New Year's Day is not considered a necessary etiquette, and some people think New Year's Day is to be celebrated within the family, and it is even said that the courtesy call could be made any time through March or at the latest before the first of June. One of the observances which had to be kept early that morning was the visit to the shrine of the *Uji-gami* [tutelary deity] and to the main family.

In the extensive mountainous regions of central Shikoku they refer to this call upon the main family as the *kado-ake* [opening the door], a strict observance of each family belonging to a single lineage in the village. I have heard of the same custom in other regions, sometimes called *kado-wake* [drawing back the gate] because of an idea that *kado*

means *mon* [gate], but formerly the big door at the entrance was called *kado*, which can be seen from the term *kado-matsu* [door pine]. This practice has been observed since unrecorded times within the group of families we call a *maki*. On that day all the branch families or the head of the most prominent one would come to the main family early in the morning, perhaps before sunrise, to open the outside door, while those inside felt as though they were welcoming the New Year. At present there seems to be the custom for the head of the main family to go later to open the door of the branch family, but this must be something new to show that they are almost equal. There is hardly any family who would leave its doors closed until so late, and actually it has come to be no more than a courtesy of receiving a glass of wine, the term *kado-ake* attaching itself to it for no clear reason.

The custom of *kado-biraki* [opening the door] in Kamiina of Shinshû is slightly different in that at this time the head of the branch family brings a *shimenawa* to fasten onto the altar of the main family, and if this is a relic of an old custom, there was formerly a little more to it, and it required more time. Two or three days before New Year the sacred rope, the *Ogami-matsu* [sacred pine], and other decorations used to be prepared, and the pine set up on the night before New Year was called *Ichiya-matsu* [one-night pine] and usually it was disliked. This saying may be of recent origin, but delaying the arrival of *Shôgatsu Sama* [New Year deity] until the morning of the 1st Day makes it rather too late. This is the beginning of the day which marked the border between the old and the new year, its exact hour on the clock having interested many scholars, and in the studies of the late Minakata Kumakusu and others it has been fairly well clarified. The point is that we Japanese formerly thought in terms of evening to morning, not morning to evening, in measuring a day, and there was no attention given to sunrise and less about exact midnight, the boundary being set by the sinking sun, proof for which can be understood in the Chinese characters written *sakuban* 昨晚 [last night] but called *yûbe* [evening] and *issaku-ban* 一昨晚 [night before last] called by many *kinô no ban* [the night of yesterday]. That is why the feast for *Toshikoshi* was an

evening meal at New Year's Eve, *Joya* in China, a fixed time at which a light was set upon the altar, a very carefully prepared bowl of rice and sacred *sake* [wine] placed there, and the whole family assembled before the altar to partake of a ritual meal. Recently in towns and cities where bill collectors hurry about until midnight and many are coming to think New Year arrives with the dawn, it would be hard for them to explain why they celebrate the feast of *Toshikoshi* in the preceding evening. Formerly this night was called *Toshi-no-yo* [New Year's Eve], and people kept the vigil in strict abstinence in the same way as on the eve of a festival at a shrine. When we consider this, the custom I have just mentioned of bringing sacred rope to put up on New Year's morning seems unnatural, and the idea of somebody coming to open the door from the outside is a little strange, too. It is presumed that originally all the branch families gathered at the main family to take part in ceremonies on the night of *Toshikoshi*, and when dawn came and brought with it an end to restrictions of abstinence, they rose cheerfully to open the big front door, and this duty of the branch families may have changed into the recent practice of coming to the main family after celebrating *Toshikoshi* at their own houses.

17 *The origin of New Year greetings within the maki*

During the process of each branch family within the *maki* becoming independent various changes appeared, but before we go into this subject, we should look a little into customs concerning New Year. Aside from the *to-ake* [opening the door], *kado-ake*, or *kado-biraki*, there are similar New Year greetings within the *maki* with which members occupy themselves during the morning of the 1st Day. According to such orthodox families, there is a year's end observance in the evening before or during the night when they go around to each family in the *maki* or, at any rate, call at the main family. The time is strikingly close to that of the ceremony on the following 1st Morning. If they were keeping the vigil of *Toshi-no-yo*, we might think they would have

remained, talking till dawn, but nowadays they usually do not stay up all night, except for the housewife and young bride, who are too busy with preparations to go to bed, and all the visitors go back to their homes and return in the morning.

Aside from the *shimenawa* and the *kado-matsu*, there were various articles and utensils which had to be newly made, for there was no year's end market in former days where they could be bought, and it required a great effort to prepare them all. We often hear of the time-honored custom of how on a certain fixed day toward the end of the year when members of related families gathered at the main family to make such things as lucky chopsticks, stirring sticks for the kettle, festival wood and flowers of wood shavings, just as they helped with pounding *mochi* for New Year. Then of course there was eating and drinking together after the work was done, which should have made it a pleasant New Year task, but really these who actually did such work were mostly members of the old, smaller branch families, and other newly branched off ones did not like to join them in that duty, calling it by old-fashioned names such as *hashi-kezuri* [chopstick whittling] or *toshi-bôkô* [New Year chores], and they did not enjoy being included with the rest, gradually carrying out their own preparations for New Year. But for all that, when we see that the head of the oldest branch family came to set up the pine boughs at the door or the duty of the most beloved old man of the clan to act as *Toshi-otoko* [New Year man] and other customs that continued, we realize that the former doings at the main family were carried on with far more intimate cooperation. As this custom began to be regarded as a mere duty or an allotted task within one lineage group to confirm or support the main family's status, it naturally loosened its grip, but the purpose in former times was to strengthen the power of the individual to meet life and to renew a feeling of happiness in worshipping the same ancestor by attending the festival of the main house year after year. Nevertheless, the spirit of the observance of New Year and the meaning of it gradually became obscure in time, which is a very important matter in our history. Social intercourse developed among people of different families while

each branch family began to worship its own ancestral deities, weakening the sense of unity. Fortunately the formality of former practices has been preserved, making it possible to inquire into traces of change.

18 *The New Year deity is the family deity*

The *Kami* worshipped at New Year becomes our first problem, the question of what deity came at the start of the year to be worshipped in due manner by all the families of the lineage group gathered at the main family. A reply to the question should be our first step, but the difficulty is that since the Recent Past⁹ there have been various changes, especially due to influence from outside. Among these changes is the inclination to observe New Year just as a social function, a time to enjoy pleasures without worshipping deities, perhaps the view held mostly in some new homes but not in many on the whole. Even among busy people in the cities there are those who go without fail in the early morning to worship at a shrine, usually that of the *Uji-gami* or the shrine of the place where they were born, and since trains can be used freely in these times, it has become the fashion to go to some great shrine to worship. Nevertheless, it is not proper for the head of the family to leave his house so early on the 1st Day. In our family we usually do not leave the house from New Year's Eve to New Year's Day except for formal business. Although we no longer observe the all night vigil, we celebrate with both the evening meal for *Toshikoshi* and in the morning with *zôni* [rice cakes in soup], putting a light on the altar, offering sacred *sake* and food, and in its presence we all exchange New Year congratulations. And we really never have had any interest in asking exactly what *Kami* was worshipped on the altar. We had a purification token from the Grand Shrine of Ise and a charm from the local *Uji-gami*, which we placed within the altar, so we vaguely thought we were worshipping those two, one from the greater and one from the lesser place. Such sentiment was not good. The idea of worshipping the national ancestral shrine is being promoted now, but it did not exist formerly and it is a new development. It

was not desirable to have distributed such venerable Imperial representations to each house in the past, and it is not fitting now. There is no denying there has been a sudden increase in the number of people who have such a sentiment when they worship their family *Kami* on New Year's morning, and the inclination may be explained as something natural. But it is a mistake to say this was the way the New Year was greeted in Japan from of old and to make people think so. There surely have been changes in the views of our people, but there never was a time when they believed that the revered great national *Kami* would visit each household at New Year. On the other hand, they never doubted that their *Shôgatsu Sama* would come each year to their own house where they would be worshipped reverently.

19 *The direction of the altar for the New Year*

It was already not clear a long time ago what *Kami* it was who visited each house at New Year to enjoy our worship, a number of people saying *Toshi-gami* [New Year deity], folk beliefs naming him *Toshitoku-jin* [deity of a good year], and some simply calling him *Shôgatsu Sama*. It is a Japanese way not to mention the name of deities although they are known, and while Shintô scholars felt no such hesitation and forced many designations on various deities, the *Shôgatsu Sama* was not named even by them. It may be true that country folk were sometimes wrong in what they thought, but their idea was of a *Kami* that usually was far away, and there was the promise that he would come in the evening of *Toshikoshi* from afar to be worshipped, which we can imagine from the following nursery song sung by children in the village toward the end of the year:

Shôgatsu Sama dôko made

Nani-nani yama no shiita made

[How far has *Shôgatsu Sama* come?

To the foot of Mount this or that]

This idea that the New Year deity comes from a distance is said to have been derived from *Hoki*, a writing about the *On'yô-dô* [the Way of

Ying-yang], whose special feature is that each year the direction from which the New Year deity comes changes a little, and I do not know exactly who settles that direction, but even nowadays there is an announcement about *ehô* or *aki no kata* [good direction] for the New Year. In rural districts of Tôhoku some say that the direction from which the last thunder of winter comes indicates the *ehô* of the New Year. At that rate the *ehô* of each little valley would turn round and round, but for some reason in Tokyo these days the *ehô* always seems to be near the east. The reason people were so careful to inquire about this was more than wanting to know which direction to take on their *ehô-mairi* [visit to the shrines in the good direction].

It may be that everyone already knows this, but it was connected with how the New Year altar should be hung. The unique point about the New Year rite was that the usual *Kami-dana* [Shintô altar] was not used. The altar was called *Toshi-dana* [New Year altar], *Toshi-gami-dana* [altar to the New Year deity], or even the propitious *Ehô-dana* [Ehô altar], and it always had to be hung facing the direction from which the New Year deity approached. We can see a typical reference to this in the humorous poem by Juppensha Ikku, the writer of *Dôchû Hizakurige*, in the Edo era:

Shôgatsu wa mô Kanda made kini kerashi

Sujikai ni tsuru Toshitoku no tana

[New Year has come as far as Kanda

The altar for *Toshitoku* hangs at *Sujikai* [slantwise]¹²

When we see this we can understand that even in Edo children were singing lines similar to "How far has *Shôgatsu Sama* come." *Sujikai* was the name of the sentry post that stood near Manseibashi between Uchikanda and Sotokanda. A little fun is poked at the slantwise shelf hung out each year for the New Year altar. People were particular about having everything set parallel to their outer wall, and fastidious families disliked even having the *andon* [night light] set up out of line at night. That they set up a special altar for New Year to face the *ehô* in spite of this must have made it conspicuous. And setting up this altar was no simple matter, either. In an old home in Tôhoku where I am acquainted there is a movable oak beam suspended below

the roof, but stored away each year and brought out again and fastened up to face the direction of the new *ehô* of the next year. But ordinary homes were not equipped to that extent. Usually a rope was suspended from the rafters at a suitable place and a board or a carefully split piece of wood was fastened to it to make a shelf facing the *ehô*, a white paper *hei* [Shintô symbol] was set upon it, the sacred rope festooned in front, and a fresh pine twig from a young pine erected at each of the four corners. *Kagami-mochi* [round cakes of *mochi* for an offering] and food were laid upon it each day, the usual *Kami-dana* not being used at New Year.

20 Feeding the deities

We can not be sure when these customs about the altar began, but they do not seem to have been present from the first in our country. This can be seen because the altars which were set up for *Toshi-gami* in remote rural districts were simple and close to nature. There is an example in which the mortar is said to rest at New Year, so it is turned upside down with a fresh straw mat laid over it, and the winnowing basket and such implements are set upon it with decorations put into them. In another example a stack of three or five newly made straw sacks of rice are placed at the entrance of the inner workroom or at the base of *Daikoku-bashira* [pillar of Daikoku or central pillar], or below the usual *Kami* altar in the living room, and upon it *Shôgatsu Sama* is worshipped in many houses. A well formed pine bough, sometimes a section of three or five year's growth from the top of a newly selected pine tree, becomes the center of decorations for the two types mentioned above, white paper *hei* as well as decorations of flowers made from wood-shavings being hung from it. Setting up pines was a feature of New Year rites and, according to the family, pine branches were placed at the entrance to little sheds, the well, and the privy, but there was a central place for the main one. In the northern part of Ooshû the central pine was called *Ogami-matsu* and it was placed in the corner of the living room where the principal hearth is, usually placed at the

base of or tied to the *Daikoku-bashira* where it can be seen directly when entering from the front door. Examples of other places are the fine pine bough or a set of pine branches placed in front of the New Year altar, the mortar or the stack of rice bags, or below the eaves by the entrance, calling it *Kado-matsu* as they do in cities where it is set up in front of the gate.

There are various explanations about the origin of the *kado-matsu* given by scholars in Kyoto, such as the author of *Segen mondô* and later writers, and they hint that this custom was introduced by military men who arrived from the country and that it did not originate in the imperial capital. The Imperial Court does not attach any importance to it even now. A significant point about this decoration has been ignored by scholars who depend upon recorded sources. In rural villages of Chûbu there is another definitely traditional custom, a strange object other than the sacred rope that is hung from the New Year pine. In Shinshû they call it *o-yasu* [food offering] or *yasu-no-goki* [dish for the food offering]. It is a simple dish or bowl made of twisted new straw, something that becomes the dish upon which to serve the offering to the deity. The *Toshi-otoko* goes around on the evening of *Toshikoshi* and the following three days and on the evenings of the 6th and 14th Days of New Year, bringing an offering from which he takes a little and sets it upon the dishes hung from the pines. When we learn that they call this *o-yashinai* [feeding the deity], the origin of the word *o-yasu* becomes clear. This is not just an unusual custom confined to a single region, for on the southern coast of Mie prefecture and on the islands off the coast of Izu peninsula the same kind of object is preserved, and in the outlying district of Tama, which is not far from Tokyo, this could be found at least one hundred years ago, something called *tsuboke* or *tsuboki* in an essay of a writer in Edo, but it is not known for what purpose it was used and whether there was the same practice in those days. In Kôshû and Shinshû they have what is called *o-yasu-no-mi* [o-yasu grain], which are frozen grains of rice from the offering which were dried, and they parched these and nibbled them a few at a time as late as the Fifth or Sixth Month. It seems that they were neither *mochi* nor cooked rice offered on the altar, but raw

rice that was washed and put into a vessel from which it was served onto various sacred dishes to set around as offerings.

21 *Resemblances between Bon and New Year*

My discussion is gradually branching out, but I want to tell a little more about the pine decoration for New Year, for even now in rural villages the term *mukae-môsu* [going to greet respectfully] is used when going to get it. Before the outbreak of the war pines for New Year decoration were heaped onto river boats and dumped onto banks to be carried to cities where the practice was criticized as one of no significance, one that wasted fuel, but it was not so in the country. Formerly the term *Matsu-mukae* [going to meet the pine] was used in the same way as *Shôgatsu-mukae* [going to meet the New Year], the date fixed as the 13th Day of *Shiwasu* [the last month of the year], which seems a bit too early, and I wonder how the pines stayed fresh and green until New Year. Recently this going to meet the pine takes place usually on the 28th Day or no later than the day before the last day of the year. At many villages they say that the pine must be selected from a mountain facing the right direction, some say from upstream, or that it must not be taken from land lower than the house. In the mountain sacred *sake* is offered to the tree and even young people take care to use a new rope with which to tie it onto the back to carry it. At the house the pine is laid respectfully upon its side, called letting the pine rest, and sacred *sake* again is offered to it. When they are finally ready to set it up, the stem is scraped to a point, which they call washing the pine's feet.

After examining these facts, anyone can see that they are comparable to practices in setting up the *Bon-dana* [Bon altar] and greeting the *Bon*, and although *Bon* now is a Buddhist observance concerned with the souls of the dead and New Year, an observance of the ritually purest and auspicious nature, that they resemble each other to this extent is not by chance. Considering that in former times, when calendars were not distributed widely or few people could read them in rural villages,

the New Year ceremony was celebrated on the evening of the full moon, exactly half a year away from *Bon*, we cannot help conjecturing that there was a planned similarity between these two observances. But we must be careful about jumping to conclusions, and when comparing the details of the practices, we see first of all there is no problem of direction at *Bon* in setting up the special altar other than the usual *butsudan* [Buddhist altar] although consideration is given to selecting a place near water beside the door or in front of the eaves, where visiting spirits arrive easily from the outside. The other difference is that pine or some other green tree is not used at *Bon*, but in its stead people go to the fields and gather various kinds of wild flowers for decoration of the *Bon-dana*. At many villages this is done on the 11th Day, but if it is done too soon, the flowers wither, so with what can be seen as a similar intention there is the custom called cutting grass for *Bon*, when a few days prior to it a path, which deities can take down from high on the mountain to the village, is cleared and swept clean. Just as there is the time set to sweep out soot before New Year, on the 7th Day of the Seventh Month the well is cleared and tools are polished, and in houses where they burn wood on their open hearth, the soot is swept. An even more significant point to notice is the custom of calls at New Year being matched by the custom and duty of calls at *Bon*, observed within the *maki*, and the main family was very particular about these. At *Bon* it was considered the usual courtesy of pious people for the caller to go first to the *Senzo-dana* to bow before greeting the living in the family. Because the special sympathetic courtesies observed for the first *Bon* after a bereavement or for the spirits of the newly dead have become elaborate in recent years, such a feeling of consolation is conscious at *Bon*, but there are many houses in which people live pleasantly without sadness for ten or twenty years. When such people exchange visits, we are impressed with the resemblance of *Bon* to New Year. "A good, quiet *Bon* to you" is a greeting. Or, "We offer best wishes for the health of all of you" is no different from a New Year greeting, and there was also a fitting greeting to offer at New Year in homes where there had been a death during the year.

22 *The form of the New Year deity*

In order to carry this comparison still further, I should explain customs concerning *mitama-no-meshi* [cooked rice for the spirit of the dead],¹³ but I will delay that until I discuss more minutely how they go to meet souls of the dead at *Bon* and later see them off when they depart. What I want to make clear here is that there is so much confusion at present concerning the nature of the New Year deity, who comes from the right direction at the start of the year to each house, that some people think this belief is different from the native faith transmitted by our country, letting their imagination go to extremes, but I think it can not be so. It is principally the ordinary people, quite apart from scholars and lecturers, who have preserved such beliefs, there being a unity in their doings beyond the boundaries of regions and classes, and we can find many evidences in bits of their practices and customs. Many points are still not clear to me and I regret not being able to explain them now, but we may come to understand them as we proceed carefully. First of all, we must stop thinking that things said and done which can only be found in Japan can be found elsewhere or considering them nothing worthy of noting. Then we can naturally recognize pertinent questions, which will turn out to be the foundation on which great human illumination has accumulated.

Why the *Toshi-gami*, which comes to our houses each New Year, is thought to be *Fuku-no-kami* [deity of fortune] by merchant families and *O-ta-no-kami* [rice field deity] by many farming families can not be explained by knowledge gained from books, and even if these people are mistaken, there still must be some unknown basis for their idea. One conception concerning this faith is that if this deity is worshipped each year, the family will prosper, and this will be manifested especially in the good yield from the rice fields and the gardens of the family, the response of previous years confirming it, and for various families whose gain or loss does not follow, there may not be *Kami* other than ancestral spirits who can be relied upon to protect and support each

of them. Along with the reverent sympathy toward the dead becoming deeper, customs concerned with Buddhist prayers for the dead became more elaborate, with the result that worshipping ancestral spirits as *Kami* grew less likely, and in their stead there appeared various deities who can not be explained by scholars of classics concerned with the Age of *Kami* in our country. Distinguishing between deities according to their functions and at the same time generalizing about their local attributes, which do not agree with the idea of *Kuni-tama* [provincial spirit] and *Kôri-tama* [Kôri spirit] in ancient Japan nor with the belief in protecting deities in the Recent Past, may have been brought about later by the influence of Buddhism.

In answer to that, what has been revealed to ordinary men should be recognized, but such material has not been gathered much. The name *Toshitoku-jin* as well as the idea of *ehô* is certainly based on the teaching of the so-called *hakase* [teachers] of *On'yô-dô*, but they have never revealed what the form of *Toshitoku-jin* was. After we came into the Meiji era, the painted sheet calendars went to an extreme, picturing *Toshitoku* in the beautiful female form of *Benten*. If not that, there would be the two figures of *Ebisu* and *Daikoku*, which seem to agree with legends of early times, for wood carvings of them are worshipped in rural families, some regarding *Ebisu* as the Rice-field God and others, *Daikoku*. This, I suppose, is the hidden reason that *Shichi Fukujin*, which is a curious grouping of seven deities, have become the most popular figures appearing in New Year topics or paintings. When we go to the country-side in Saga prefecture, Kyûshû, we find *Toshitoku* identified with *Fukurokuju*, who is said to look like a *sennin* [hermit], and young girls are not allowed to eat food offered to this New Year deity. Tradition forbids it because it would be terrible if the girl should give birth to an infant with such a long, bald head. This is not a folk faith limited to a small area, nor does it appear to be a new folk faith, for one hundred and fifty years ago Shiba Kôkan wrote in *Saiyû nikki* about a picture of *Toshitoku-jin* hung in houses on the island of Hirado in Hizen, stating that it was *Jurô-jin*, one of the *Shichi Fukujin*. In other words, there were people there, too, who imagined the New Year deity as the old man of good fortune.

When children used to gather and sing lustily, "How near has *Shôgatsu Sama* come," that *Shôgatsu Sama* seems to have been an old man, as we can conjecture from the words of their songs, and there are likely those who recall this impression. In the far coastal region of Fukushima prefecture they say that *Shôgatsu Sama* rides home on the smoke of the fire which burns New Year decorations on the 15th, and it is said that if you look closely, you can see the forms of an aged couple like the white-haired man and his wife of *Takasago* [of the Noh play] appear dimly in the smoke thinning out toward the west in the evening. In the deep south of Kyûshû they say that on New Year's Eve an old man called *Toshi Don* [Mr. New Year] or *Toshi Jii San* [Grandfather New Year] comes to bring a New Year treasure of *mochi* to good children. Although they really do not believe it, they say that unless this *mochi* is eaten, another year can not be added, which is exactly like talk about Santa Claus from abroad, and in old fashioned communities on Shimokoshiki Island there is a custom of hiring somebody to be *Toshi Jii San*, who comes with a basket on his head and knocks on the door late at night to bring children their New Year treasures. If besides making a household prosperous and rice fields bear abundantly, even granting another year of life is due to the power of *Toshi-gami*, the identification of this deity with family *Kami* is quite clear. I can hardly think of any other deity that serves the family to that extent. At *Bon*, also, children used to call the spirits who came to their peaceful families *Jii San* [Grandfather] and *Baa San* [Grandmother]. This corresponds to the idea which we are about to investigate, the faith of many that ancestors blend into a single form to help protect their descendants, a more fitting designation for them being hard to find to make children feel closer to them. And in the vision of worshippers our *Uji-gami* often is revealed in the form of an old man. My concept of *Toshi-gami* as being our ancestors takes root here.

23 *The idea of the Senzo-matsuri*

My opinion is that there is other clear evidence that the celebration

of New Year and *Bon* were once more closely related than at present and the reason that they have become distinctly different has been not only due to the teachings of Buddhism, but we must recognize the fact that thinking about *Kami* has narrowed bit by bit with the times. Since the presentation of this idea is relatively simple, I will explain about the *Senzo-matsuri* and take up the discussion of *Bon* later.

Just as the meaning of the word *senzo* varies considerably according to persons, so the usage of the term *Senzo-matsuri* has become very broad, making it difficult to unify its extremes. For example, when the way of observing the ancestral festival is criticized as lacking, what is meant is that Buddhist memorial services for the dead have been neglected. This shortcoming is brought to light when sickness in the family persists a long time or when bad dreams trouble people every night. Then somebody himself suddenly realizes it or it is mentioned by somebody else, sometimes being made known through a fortune teller. The memory of close relatives such as parents, children, and brothers can not go out of one's mind, and if one could forget them there would be no concern for them, but for the departed souls of distant blood relatives whom one seldom recalls, one may miss out observing an anniversary service unintentionally. Being deeply concerned about it, one is apt to be afflicted subconsciously at such a time. However, it is neither according to Buddhist teachings nor old practices in Japan for ordinary people to carry out services for the dead at the seventieth or one hundredth anniversary, but it is probably due to the fact that temples, whose patrons have become reduced in number, must maintain themselves somehow. There is a well-known story about how a venerable Buddhist monk called Myôhen Sôjô at Mt. Kôya refused to offer prayers for the thirteenth anniversary for the spirit of his departed father when asked by his brothers to do it. He insisted that it was against the will of Buddha to think the dead should wander through *Rokudô*¹⁴ for five or seven years before attaining Buddhahood because the dead should have already been reborn into Amida's Pure Land according to Buddhist faith. It is the same in the case of *Bon* rites, for Buddhist priests, while guaranteeing rebirth into Buddha's Paradise through the merits of their prayers and services, made believers think at the same time

that the souls continued to return to this world at every *Bon* to have sutras read for their peace, which seems to show that the priests lacked self-confidence. There should not have been any reason for Japanese to have such contradictions in their hearts, for from long ago we had an independent way of thinking which has not disappeared, a belief that ancestors return every year at a fixed time, and this was good, and it was a point held prior to any change brought by Buddhism.

One matter which I wish to emphasize in this book is that the after life of our people, the eternal existence of souls within our land and not in a distant place, has been firmly maintained from the beginning of the world until now. I think this is an important feature distinguished from the doctrine of any imported religion, but there has arisen a dispute over the two views whether this or that idea is right, and somehow the decision has been allowed to fade off like the tinted light of dawn. Letting matters stand that way gives us a disadvantage. The reason is that the other side has been ready with pen and word, compiling plenty of written matter, while this side had only the conception of what was common knowledge from of old, for which there never had been any demand of proof. In spite of having had this disadvantage, this native concept has been handed down to this day, giving immeasurable influence upon the lives of our people, and we must recognize that it is of great importance in our history. The aim and the way of observing a festival for ancestral spirits should differ according to the views held, whether our ancestral spirits remain in this land forever or that they go off by the effects of our sutras and prayers to Amida's Pure Land billions of miles away. In fact, change has already been brought on, but old practices are still kept unconsciously both at New Year and *Bon* together with many other occasions.

24 *Fixing the day for the Senzo-matsuri*

Most use of the term *Senzo-matsuri* even today indicates annual observances in the *maki* centered around the old main family on certain days other than New Year or at *Bon*. It is clear that they intended to

unite in a memorial service for a distant ancestor through the cooperation of each family of the *maki*, and we can see that frequently it was really according to a plan begun by a certain ancestor, but in its continuance there are at least two matters which Buddhist believers today find hard to explain or even to consider. As these are the new points to be noticed, I will explain them in detail.

There may be other big questions that will come to mind as we proceed, but the first will be the question of what day should be selected as the one for the *Senzo-matsuri*, and the second should be how it is celebrated, but we will set the latter question aside for a while. A Buddhist rite of *hōji* [memorial service] or *nenkai* [anniversary service] was, as we all know, for a particular person. Therefore there arises a problem about the date for the memorial service of an ancestor whose day of death is not known. Disregarding little differences in counting years, old anniversaries were usually combined into one big occasion, but there appeared hesitation about which one's anniversary it was best to select. In old families that had continued for nearly twenty generations it was a difficult task to take care of these matters. Of course, they got information from the temple where there were registers of family deaths of parishioners and the book of records according to each year. Besides, there was a little list of anniversaries of the dead family members on the ancestral altar in each house, and some faithful person thumbed through it every morning to repeat the name of the *Hotoke* for the day as he struck a little bell, but this tended to be a limited practice and was by no means regarded as the same as a joint rite of the whole family or clan. The wife in the family had the responsibility and usually remembered the important day, making an especially thoughtful offering, even observing abstinence in the past, but that was for the ancestor who had restored the family or for a certain prominent old person who had worked for the family, and somehow the less important ones were apt to be forgotten. Unfortunately it often gave one a shock that he was criticized for scanty observances for those unimportant ancestors. In other words, when a family became old and the number of souls of the departed who should be worshipped increased,

it became more and more difficult to carry on the observances for all of them.

As the family continued long and increased in number, observances for some ancestors seemed to be carried out less carefully and the memorial services were gradually performed at longer intervals, finally being forgotten, all of which was not derived from Buddhism but resulted from its compromise with the original practice of our people after it was introduced into Japan, and it can be said that the good was accepted with the bad. In spite of there having been a good custom among us of gathering together every year to worship our ancestors and to spend a fixed length of time with them, the tendency was to put our efforts into anniversaries for only a few individuals and eventually many other ancestors were slighted. Excluding a case in which a noted historical figure such as Hachiman Tarô or Kamakura Gongorô was worshipped as the founder of the family, most of our ancestors were obscure people whose names were commonly given again, repeated in every other generation, so that they were apt to be confused. Therefore only parents, grandparents, and a few other dimly remembered forefathers were respected, while the love for the more distant ancestors gradually was lost, and *Bon* has come to be considered a quiet occasion mainly to celebrate as an additional memorial service at families where there has been a recent death. I do not want to dismiss this as just something that goes with the times. At any rate, things were not as they are now. If the *Senzo-matsuri* in the past had been like that of the present, families would not have continued as long as they have, and people would not have appeared to work so hard for the continuance of their family, a matter which I think is important to make clear.

25 *New Year for ancestors*

To observe anniversary services at home for each ancestral spirit at certain ten-year intervals seemed to be a courteous practice, but it could only be performed incompletely. As the family grew older and the

number of the dead increased, family heads who lived but a short time were frequently disregarded. Added to these were the family members who had no children or who did not set up their own branch family, and no matter how much they had exerted themselves for the main family and their country, most of them became *Muen Sama* [homeless spirits].¹⁵ Sorrow over this state of affairs may not have been entirely the basis for the idea, but formerly Japanese thought that all the members of a family without distinction would merge into one sacred ancestral spirit called *Go-Senzo Sama* or *Mitama Sama* a certain number of years after death. This may be difficult for present people to understand, for they tend to individualize *Kami*, and it is a point which can raise a few questions, but I have come across proof here and there that the earlier concept existed. To begin with, when we asked the one responsible for the annual observance for ancestors at the main family of the *maki* who the ancestor was, he could not reply with any conviction.

It will be worthwhile for us to survey the selection of the day for this joint *Senzo-matsuri*. The custom of visiting the family grave to worship during the seven days of *Higan* [equinox of spring and autumn], the middle day being called *Jishô* [day of equinox] in old times, may have been introduced from China, seeing that it is based upon advanced knowledge of the calendar, but selecting the two days of equinox for the ancestral observances called *Higan-e* had no connection with Buddhist writings. It is a good time for this *matsuri*, considering the season and agricultural activities, and we felt extremely encouraged when the Imperial Court recognized this folk custom by making it a national holiday. As far as I know, this custom is observed independently from Buddhism at present only in agricultural communities in northern Akita, where they light fires to greet the souls and to send them on their way at the vernal equinox, much as at *Bon*, but there are traces that indicate this was an important observance held more widely in Japan. Even if we agree that choosing the vernal and autumnal equinoxes arose from a later idea, that the *Senzo-matsuri* was observed at the time may have been very old.

It may be a roundabout way, but it is necessary to enumerate examples

from various regions where they celebrate the ancestral festival before or after New Year. Among these are the customs observed on the islands called Juttô-son, formerly called Shichi-tô or Michi-no-shima, the little islands that stretch out like a line of chessmen from the southern shore of Satsuma to the northern edge of Amami Oshima in Kagoshima. Nobody has yet been able to explain the reason for it, but there is a big festival called *Shichi-tô Shôgatsu* at about the time of New Year by the solar calendar, a whole month ahead of the New Year of the lunar calendar in the main islands, a fact which seems strange. There are some slight variations among the islands, but on Takarajima there is a special New Year festival which begins on the 28th Day of the Eleventh Month and continues until the 6th of the Twelfth Month. The most important day is the 1st Day of the Twelfth Month when all the inhabitants of the village gather in the morning to worship *Kami*, and since they call this *naorai* [ritual feast for *Kami* and men], it is obviously an ancestral festival. Just as the moon rises on the evening of the 6th Day of that month, the deities retire toward the sea with rites to see them off that are similar to ours at *Bon*, except that the period of the visit is a little longer. An additional point resembling ours is their calling it *Oyadama-matsuri*, meaning the festival for the spirits of ancestors.

26 *The shrine for deified ancestors*

The word *oyadama* is used at present only in a peculiar sense and it may give a queer impression, but for *oya* there is an ancient term *tôtsu-oya* [ancient parents] and even today *oya* is sometimes used broadly to designate a senior, not only a real parent. The word *senzo* is of Chinese origin, but before it was imported *oya* or *oya-oya* seems to have been used, and while the abbreviated form *Tama-matsuri* was used at *Bon*, it actually referred to the *Tama-matsuri* of the *Oya-oya*. There are places here and there where the *Uji-gami* is called *Oya-gami*. Around Uchikaifu on Sado Island, the evening of the 6th Day of New Year is called *Oya-gami San no Toshiya* [New Year's Eve of the ancestral

custom of celebrating New Year on *mochi-no-yoru* [night of the full moon] or *mochi-no-hi* [day of the full moon], there being two ways of calculating it, the general one in Oou calling the time from the evening of the 14th Day to the morning of the 15th Day *Toshikoshi*. When we recall the old way of setting the boundary of the day from sunset, we can not say this was exactly the New Year's Day of the full moon, for the 1st Day of the New Year should be from the evening of the 15th Day to the evening of the 16th Day. And the 16th Day is observed as the ancestral festival even now in many regions. The custom of calling the 14th Night *Toshikoshi* in Tôhoku may have been a way of deliberately separating the New Year celebration from the *matsuri* for ancestors by one afternoon and evening. The possibility of this being the case can be seen from the following discussion of various customs concerning *mitama-no-meshi*.

In fact, there are very many examples of selecting the 16th Day as the one on which to worship ancestors. In the south, even on Tokunoshima in the Amami archipelago south of the Shichi-tô, this day was called *Senzo-shôgatsu* [ancestral New Year], and they used to gather all together before the ancestral grave for a drinking party. I have not yet heard about how it is celebrated in Kyûshû. In the two prefectures of Tokushima and Ehime on Shikoku on the last day of the Snake or Horse¹⁷ in the last month of a year there is a celebration at the grave, so that it is not approached during the days of New Year, but this applies to families in which there has been a death during the past year, while those having had no sorrow and having lived serenely for a long time go to the graves on the 16th of the New Year to celebrate *Hotoke-shôgatsu*. The same custom prevails in all parts of Chûgoku, in which there is a practice of toasting pieces of *kagami-mochi* which has been taken down from the New Year altar on the 11th Day or putting them into *zôni* to offer on the ancestral altar on the 16th Day to celebrate *Hotoke-shôgatsu*.

In Higashikambara-gun of Echigo this 16th Day is called *goshô-hajime* [resuming the observance for the dead]. There is actually nothing wrong about considering the worship of ancestors as one of the affairs concerning the after life, but there is nothing sad or unpleasant about

performing such services for ancestors of a family which has continued a long time and whose descendants have been long-lived. Avoiding the ancestral rite during the week of the New Year when the pine is set up and holding it after the 16th Day, which was called *kane-okoshi* [initial bell ringing] or *nembutsu-no-kuchiake* [starting Buddhist prayers] was because of the strong Buddhist flavor in the rite, much like a memorial service for a newly departed soul, especially in calling the ancestor spirits *hotoke* without any reason. There certainly would have been many people who would have felt embarrassed to be called *hotoke* after death although they had their funeral rite performed in Buddhist style. According to Japanese feeling, even if the flesh decays and the body disappears, the tie to the native land is not cut, and each year the spirit returns on a fixed day to the home of its descendants and wants to see how the children are growing and gradually taking their places in their work in society, and contrary to this sentiment of our people, Buddhist priests persuaded them to aim at attaining Buddhahood, to give up their hope of returning to this world, and to be helped off to a distant place. No matter how they explained it, their teaching has not been thoroughly accepted.

28 *Days of purification and abstinence*

In Tokyo since the Edo era the 16th Day, both at *Bon* and New Year, has been called *o-sainichi* [day of abstinence], the day on which the lid of the cauldron in *Jigoku* [Hell] was taken off, and people went to the temple to pray to *Emma* [the King of Hell]. Even in Kyoto and Osaka and other big cities the term *o-sainichi* still exists, but unfortunately there are few who are interested in the origin of this old word. The earlier Japanese word for this Chinese term was *toki-no-hi*. We think *toki* [a time] has the same meaning in general as *setsu*, a particularly important time during the year; in other words, a day on which to carry out a *matsuri*, one which was correctly expressed by the character *sai* 齋. *Sai* was concerned with ritual purity, something undefiled, and special food was prepared as a ritually pure offering on that day. There

is not such significance in the Japanese word *toki*, but through the use of the character for *sai*, we can see what the former connotation was for the word *toki*. On the other hand, it is no longer clear from which period the *sai-han* 齋飯 [abstinence meal] served Buddhist priests began to be called *toki-no-meshi* [a meal served a priest by a parishioner] and eventually it was change to *o-toki*, which came to be the standard word for the meal served them after funerals or memorial services. It was natural, at that rate, to dislike calling meals by that word at congratulatory observances, but there are many places in the country which refer to an annual day of importance as *toki-bi* [a *toki* day] or *toki-setsu* [a *toki* time], for example, the 16th Day of the New Year on which the *senzo-matsuri* is observed is an important *toki-bi*.

In Chûgoku some people even now use terms such as festival days of *San-toki* [three *toki*] and *Go-sekku* [five *sekku*].¹⁸ The three *toki* are the 16th Day of the First, Fifth, and Ninth Months, among which the 16th Day of the Fifth Month of the lunar calendar was observed with particular care, for it was at the time of transplanting rice seedlings, and it was customary for people to stay away from rice fields on that day, the horses were not used, and everyone remained secluded in his home to serve *Kami*, preparing white rice for the communion of deity and men. Formerly there may have been such a celebration each month on the 16th Day, on the morning following the night of the full moon, and there is still the custom in Saitama prefecture for people to visit family graves on this day every month, so it is not of recent origin that to four month intervals, the First, Fifth, and Ninth, great importance was attached as festival months. The 16th Day of the Sixth Month was called *Kajô* or *Katsû* in Kyoto since Ashikaga times and it was a fixed day of celebration. The origin of this is not clear, but since the meal was the dominant feature, it probably was a *toki-bi* from long ago. The 16th of the Ninth Month has some connection with harvesting rice in contrast with the time when seedlings were transplanted, which was connected with the 16th Day of the Fifth Month, and it was one of the three *toki*, but I know no special tradition about it. I would like respectfully to offer one example at both Ise Shrines of the traditional observance of *Go-sai* or *O-sainichi* on the 16th Day of the

Ninth Month at the Gegû [Outer Shrine] and on the following day at the Naigû [Inner Shrine]. This is an extraordinary example, for there is no such custom among common folk except some beliefs and tradition concerning this observance found in surrounding villages, along the coast there, and at a few Shinmei shrines in other regions [dedicated to the same deity as that of Ise Grand Shrine] where the 16th Day of the Ninth Month is observed as a festival day.

There is an example of a *toki* festival held on the 16th Day of the Seventh Month by people who work in the forest reaching from northern Kantô to Aizu. On the 16th of the First and Seventh Months they make *mochi* offerings during strict abstinence and gather at a specified house to observe a vigil to worship *Otento Sama*, namely, Amaterasu-omikami [Sun Goddess]. At any rate, this is an observance for *Kami* and has nothing to do with Buddhism. Both *o-sainichi* in Edo were probably similar *Kami* festivals observed at six-month intervals, originally called *toki-no-hi*. At *Bon*, however, the observance followed sending off the souls of the dead, and it seemed to be a portentous rite although at present no trace of it can be found. Of course, there was an opposite feeling among young people who had left their home to work, for *Bon* was a time to rest and join with the *mitama* [spirits] of parents and spend the time eating together. That *Bon* was originally a *toki* celebration with good cheer can be seen from this old custom of meeting with *iki-mitama* [living spirits].

29 *The Senzo-matsuri in the Fourth Month*

I think that New Year and *Bon* were formerly celebrated without any differences, just as the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, as two *toki* observances, but in order to prove this we must consider a little more carefully how people have lived and thought, how they changed a little at a time over a long period of years, and it is necessary to look for traces of things belonging to the past that have continued until now under favorable conditions, and we must gather and compare facts in order to perceive and explain what the former outlook was before it

changed. It is hard to come by material which exactly fits our need, but recently I had the good fortune of discovering some, by chance, which is useful new evidence. This is about another day for *Senzo-matsuri*, one different from the examples I have given thus far, and I am grateful to the person who called it to my attention.

At the *maki* of the Hyakutake family in Murakami, Echigo, they celebrate *Senzo-matsuri* every year on the 15th Day of the Fourth Month and the 23rd Day of the Ninth Month. The place where it is celebrated is the Haguro shrine, the local *Chinju* shrine [shrine of the tutelary deity], and all the family heads of the *maki* gather there to worship the ancestors of each family in addition to their common ancestor. At present two men take the responsibility for the celebration, the assignment being rotated, and the ones in charge are called *kagura-ban* [one in charge of Shintô music and dance]. In other words, there does not seem to be a single central household in charge as in the observance within a clan in other places. Everyone with the same family name, even though they usually have little intercourse, gather at this time, so this *maki* must have been one of the big ones. And they call their *Senzo-matsuri* a *Shinto-matsuri*. Since this name seems to show it is a Shintô rather than a Buddhist festival, it can not be an old designation and these festival days also are likely to have been set recently, but the question remains as to what they relied upon in selecting the days. Perhaps there were many other instances of Fourth and Ninth Month ancestral days in this area. When I have the opportunity, I would like to investigate this festival and the rites accompanying it in greater detail.

As I said before, since there were more than a few ancestors, when it was difficult to decide whose anniversary should be selected, it was necessary to set another good day, but there must have been a definite motive for selecting the 15th of the Fourth Month. If this happened at only one place, we could say it was by chance, but many examples of this have been found in Shinshû. About the time the *senzo-matsuri* of the Hyakutake family came to light there was a report on a survey by the Board of Education of Higashi-chikuma-gun in Shinshû concerning *Iwai-den* [shrines] in various villages, in which celebrations of the 15th

of the Fourth Month, or one week prior or following on the 8th or 22nd, were listed to a conspicuous degree. *Iwai-den* is a little shrine worshipped in each *maki* of this district and from Suwa and Ina to western Kôshû, corresponding to what are called *Ikke Uji-gami* [family tutelary deity] in Tôhoku or southern Kyûshû. And when I noticed that some called this shrine *Iwai-jin*, I saw that it meant they worshipped the soul of the ancestor as *Kami*. That this observance occurs each year, usually on the day of the full moon in the Fourth Month or just before or after it, makes it very close to the example above in Echigo. It may be that my speculation goes too far, but I consider there is a significant relationship between a year and the cycle of rice cultivation in Japan. I am wondering if this is not an example of an old custom from times before the official calendar was distributed to all the corners of the land, when folk felt that the day of the full moon in early summer was the beginning of the year, and the old custom of worshipping ancestors at that time continued independently of the official New Year. Later I will take up another custom of going to the mountains on the 8th of the Fourth Month to meet the souls of the dead, which will lend support to this idea.

30 *The Ta-no-kami and Yama-no-kami*

There was a time when the sole basis for establishing a family was land holding. Rice fields were the necessary property for the continuance of the family, and without exception they formerly counted the generations of the family from the first reclamation or the inheritance of the land and not always from the origin of the lineage, and even now land and family are inseparable. We might say that all the efforts of ancestors for their descendants were identified with the effort they put into land. What we must take into consideration is that among the many crops on farms, the rice plant had special significance; that is to say, it had a spiritual character as something offered to the lord or emperor and deity on the one hand, and on the other, its production depended upon more than man's effort, its greater dependence in culti-

vation being upon sunlight and water. It was natural that many people believed that the souls of the ancestors who had provided the rice fields for the existence of the family were more concerned than anyone else in the success of the fields year after year and they would try to lend them their strong support. This is one of the bases for my supposition that the *Ta-no-kami* [rice field deity], sometimes called *Nô-gami* or *Saku-gami* [deity of agriculture], who has been excluded from Shintô studies and is always ignored regardless of its native origin, was identified as well as the *Toshi-no-kami* of New Year with the ancestral spirit worshipped in each family.

Eventually the time will come when this theory can be proved or disproved. It does not matter in the least that there are people who question or doubt it now. I would simply regret if they should close their minds to a few facts related to the problem. For example, there is one matter about which we have given careful thought for a long time—the tradition that in the spring the *Yama-no-kami* [mountian deity] descends to the farming settlements and becomes the *Ta-no-kami* and ascends again into the mountains at the end of autumn to become *Yama-no-kami* once more—which may not seem to amount to much, but it is found throughout the land from the farthest north to the farthest south, places in which the belief is not transmitted being scarce, and that it is so wide-spread makes it a fact of great importance, although there are many people who have not yet taken notice of it. Scholars themselves have identified our *Yama-no-kami* with *Oyamatsumi-no-kami* or *Konohanasakuya-hime-no-kami*, but actually the tradition of this deity and its divine attributes differed according to the occupational groups of its worshippers, such as hunters, woodcutters, or sailors. The worship of *Yama-no-kami* as a deity to be worshipped in common is usually a new practice at a newly erected shrine, and it depends upon another kind of tradition. Because the *Yama-no-kami* of the farmer rests in the mountains only one fourth of the year and during the other three fourths comes to habitations to protect the rice field, remaining in the field or at its edge, we could say it stays in the mountains only during the winter.

There are various ways according to region of regarding this deity,

some saying that the deity returns home, others that it descends from high heaven directly to each house, or that it returns once to the family to be worshipped and then ascends again, but they all agree concerning the two times, its coming in the spring and returning in the winter on a day designated as *Yama-no-kami Matsuri* or the Day of *Yama-no-kô* by the farmers. One feature is that the days of descending and ascending correspond in the Second and Eleventh Months, be they the 7th, 9th, or 12th Day, but in a fairly wide area of Tôhoku the 16th Day is regarded as the *toki-no-hi* when the *Nô-gami* or *Saku-gami* ascends or descends. There the winter day is often in the Tenth Month rather than in the Eleventh and the spring day is the 16th of the Second or Third Month. On this day people get up before dawn to make *shitogi-mochi*, and they say that *Ta-no-kami* ascends or descends at the sound of their pounding it. And if they do not have rice to pound, many of them make the sound of pounding in an empty mortar. Because the *mochi* is made and then offered to the *Kami*, this saying can be seen to have originated from the spring festival. Actually, ceremonies for when the rice field deity returns to the mountains vary according to districts. If there was an idea that instead of crossing into the Buddhist Paradise, the souls of our ancestors remain in a quiet, calm place in our land to return at a fixed time each year, then instead of in early autumn when the rice stalks are starting to flower, would not that time be when men are preparing to plant rice seed beds and their hearts are sensitive as they hopefully await the return of the *Kami*. And is this not the reason why only farmers have continued their New Year festival for ancestors even after the new calendar was established. Even after Buddhists took charge of *Bon*, the country folk continued to celebrate their *Tama-matsuri* at the end of the year. There remain old customs which are more than just traces of this even now.

31 *The Tama-matsuri at the year's end*

It was not a recent change that the *Tama-matsuri*, which was originally celebrated at New Year, became a part of observances of the year's

end. Lines from *Tsurezure-gusa*, which everybody recalls, say
Tsugomori no yo ito kuraki ni naki hito no kuru yo tote,
tama matsuru waza wa kono koro miyako ni wa naki o, azuma
no kata niwa nao suru koto nite arishi koso aware narishika
[In the darkness of New Year's Eve *Tama-matsuri* is no
longer observed in the capital as the night when dead ones come,
and it is interesting that in eastern provinces it is still celebrated].
These lines relate that the observance was held before the morning of
the 1st Day and that it took place during the night, and actually there
are a number of examples of this festival in the eastern part of the
country celebrated even now on some day from the year's end until
the New Year pine is taken down. This custom had disappeared in
Kyoto at the time Kenkô lived. Some three hundred years before that
there was a line from a poem by Izumi Shikibu:

Naki hito no kuru yo to kike do kimi mo nashi

[I hear it is the night dead souls come back but you do not return].

The line from a poem by Sone Yoshitada says

Tama matsuru toshi no owari ni nari ni keru

[The close of the year has come when the *Tama-matsuri* is
celebrated].

This also shows that already in that period greeting the souls of the
dead was a rite during the night before New Year, making a distinction
between it and ceremonies in the morning of the 1st Day. It is not
likely, as many people suppose, that the change in customs first appeared
in the Recent Past.

At the same time, aspects of life in older times continued much
longer than one would expect. For example, in *Echigo fûzoku toijô kotae*,
written one hundred twenty or thirty years ago, it states that some
villages reported that the souls of the dead come on the last day of
the Twelfth Month at the hour of the Horse (noon) and return at
the hour of the Hare on the morning of the 1st Day of the New Year.
We can hardly say the visit of the souls was a long one, but the hour
of the Hare would be after what we call six o'clock in the morning,
about the time the *toso* [New Year wine] and *zôni* are served to
celebrate the New Year. We can not explain as yet why the hour

of the Hare was set, but there is a saying which may have some connection with it in the same region of Echigo, as well as in Shinshû and rural villages near Tokyo, which is that *Shôgatsu Sama* departs on the first day of the Hare¹⁹ in the New Year. It is said that if the day of the Hare comes early in the year, there will be a good harvest because the New Year deity will leave one to [about four and a half gallons] of rice uneaten for each day left in the cycle of days, but if the year starts with the day of the Dragon, there will be twelve days before that of the Hare, and the New Year deity will require twelve bowls of rice, making prospects of a bad harvest that year. Delight over how brief the visit of the New Year deity was seems a bit strange, but we can consider it as proof that originally this deity was the spirit of the ancestor, and the tendency was, on the whole, to separate the *Senzo-matsuri* from the celebration of New Year. When we compare this with the example on the Shichi-tô I have already given, it seems that at first the New Year celebration lasted for about seven days until the evening of the 6th Day of New Year, but later, when the 1st Day of the Hare was adopted as the day on which the New Year deity departed, the period of celebration was thought to vary with the year. It is apparent through our recent experience of adopting the solar calendar that the new calendar system indicated a new schedule, in general, without interfering with actual customs. And various adjustments were made according to regions, changing the day or the month of the observance or conforming to the new system until the rite common throughout the land became varied and the inherent feeling about it weakened. We can think that the reason why many people have forgotten that the *Tama-matsuri* was an ancestral festival arises from these circumstances.

32 *Water for the Senzo-matsuri*

In contrast to the elaborate observance of the *Tama-matsuri* at Bon, that which is held from the year's end to the New Year is strikingly simple. I wonder what the reason is for these marked differences. Of

course, we can imagine that new matters have been added to *Bon*, but more important than that is the fact that part of the customs of the *Tama-matsuri*, in so far as it did not conflict, is woven into the general practices at New Year. We must analyze these in detail now, but I will take one which seems to be overlooked casually by some people—namely, the water offering at the grave and the constant offering of something to drink to the souls of ancestors at *Bon*, a matter which the Buddhist teachers can not explain. This is one of the special features of Japanese folklore, and it has been confirmed by some that there is no basis for it in Buddhist scriptures. In contrast, the two offerings of rice and water are indispensable in our celebration of the *Tama-matsuri*. It is the custom at present to set out a portable stove on the veranda, to heat water and parch tea leaves over it, and to offer freshly prepared tea many times a day, calling it *chatô*. Besides that, a big water container is placed before the altar and fresh water from the well is sprinkled over the offerings constantly. Some explain this by saying that it is because the spirits of the ancestors suffer great thirst at *Bon*, but that alone hardly explains the fact that what are called *mizu-no-kome*, *mizu-no-mi*, or *mizu-no-ko*, which are washed grains of rice or powdered rice, are always put into the water, and to them are added finely cut cucumber or eggplant, which seems an extremely naive way, but that seems to have been how the food was offered. At places in Tôhoku where an observance is held at the grave on the 14th and 15th Day, there is always a conspicuous offering of powdered rice stirred into water in the offerings and this white mixture is poured onto the grave. Calling this *araneko* may come from *arai-yone* [washed rice] and not as mistakenly called *arare* by a change in pronunciation, but what we call *arare-mochi* [parched small pieces of *mochi*] has something in common with this offering of rice powder.

I think all this is because the strongest bonds between the distant ancestors and their old scenes were water and rice. Besides the fact that Japanese held that cultivation of rice was the original requirement for setting up the family, they have always been keenly aware of the flavor of water, and they are always concerned about it when they are on a journey. One of the important acts of hospitality at the

ancestral festival seemed to be offering water, as much as to say, "Have a drink of this water you knew from the day of your birth and throughout all your life." Then a question arises about how this feeling was experienced in the *Tama-matsuri* at the year's end. As far as I know, only at a remote village called Akka in a corner of Rikuchû in Tôhoku there is an example where the *Toshi-otoko* draws water called *waka-mizu* [first water] at the dawn of New Year and boils rice in it to make a rice offering called *mitama-no-meshi*, which is the central feature of this *matsuri*, while in other regions this *Tama-matsuri* ends by midnight with no ceremony involving water. There is as yet no explanation for the meaning of the ceremony of drawing fresh water at the dawn of New Year or why it is called *waka-mizu*. I am inclined to think that when the number of people increased who mistakenly began to celebrate the *Toshi-gami* festival on the morning of the 1st Day, they decided to make this distinction for the *Mitama* festival. But even now there are a number of places where the arrival of the *Toshi-gami* is earlier, by the time they worship it and take the ritual meal of *Toshitori* [adding a year]. Furthermore, if the ceremony corresponding to greeting the *waka-mizu* is from long ago, it should have taken place in the same way as greeting the New Year pine, which would have been previous to the *Tama-matsuri*.

33 Cooked rice for the *Mitama*

We can see the intention on the whole of separating the celebration of the *Tama-matsuri* at the close of the year from the general New Year observance, but these seem to be new attempts, and in remote areas such as Akka there is confusion with the *Toshi-gami Matsuri*, the two being nearly merged into one. Offering *Toshi-gami* the *kagami-mochi* and cooked rice to *Mitama Sama* seems to be regarded as usual, but there are a number of exceptions to this in Tôhoku, especially at Akka, where the *mitama-no-meshi* is transferred to a wooden measure, which is put onto a basket, and they set it on the mortar, facing the basket toward the good direction of the New Year and worshipping

toward it, making it just like an altar for the *Toshi-gami*. In the northern part of Nagano prefecture in the Chûbu region they offer the *mitama-no-meshi* heaped into a bowl called *mitama-no-hachi* [mitama bowl] on the *Kami* altar, or it is left at the edge of the altar, and at old houses in Echigo it is set in the *tokonoma* [alcove] as an ornament.

But many more examples are generally found at present where this cooked rice is set inside the *butsudan*. This is clearly one reason why the *Tama-matsuri* can not be regarded as belonging to the New Year ceremonies, but on the other hand, there are parts of the old custom still preserved for some reason from long ago. I want to explain these in some detail. What is regarded in this observance as quite usual is that after the feast of *Toshitori* is finished, freshly cooked white rice is prepared as *mitama-no-meshi*. And there are a number of examples, mainly in the six prefectures of Tôhoku, of making rice balls with undefiled hands, before they have touched the fish for the *Toshitori* feast, and offering them, while in Shinshû this rice is usually placed on a piece of paper on a tray or just piled high in a wooden bowl. It is also mentioned in *Ryûro zuihitsu* that in those days a rice offering put into a bowl or on a plate was made in the vicinity of Edo from Hachiôji to Kôshû, but it is probably no longer done. In any case, the custom of closing the *butsudan* after the offering was made to *Go-Senzo Sama* and leaving it closed until the 3rd Day of New Year is the same in any region.

We might think that they had rather advanced or postponed the date of this observance to avoid the congratulatory New Year's Day, but we can see through the manner in which the rice offering was taken down that it was part of the New Year ceremonies. The *mitama-no-meshi* was lifted down from the *butsudan* as early as on the 4th Day of New Year, and it was customary to put it into *zôni*, the proper food to eat that morning, but at remote regions in Nambu it was left until the 7th Day and added to the gruel of rice and small red beans; and in Kazuno, after pretending to boil it with the gruel of Seven Herbs, it was placed in a straw wrapper and put away to feed in gruel to those sick with loose bowels. In farming villages in Tsugaru in Aomori at some houses even now the *mitama-no-meshi* is offered as a part of

the observance for *Ko-shôgatsu*, which is celebrated on the 15th Day, but this is only a one-night offering, and in the following morning of the 16th Day it is put into gruel. And this gruel is the same as ours of the 15th Day, a ritually very pure food which we offer as first fruits to *Kami*.

34 *Chopsticks and the shape of rice balls*

For those who eat rice every day *mitama-no-meshi* may not seem an especially significant offering, but the *Mitama-matsuri* on the night of *Toshikoshi* is observed mainly in places where rice is not the usual food of common people even now, and this rice offering makes a deep impression upon those people. In spite of the numerous examples that have been assembled, if we exclude the two points of using cooked rice for the offering and calling it *mitama-no-meshi*, there is a lack of unity in the observance throughout the land, particularly marked differences in small details. Not only I, but anyone who compares those examples, would find it impossible to overlook the possibility that this ceremony from medieval times has changed little by little. In order to discover how it has changed we must enter constantly into minute details, the first being what I have already mentioned, the two ways of offering rice to souls, one of heaping it into a bowl or onto a folded paper and the other, packing it into rice balls. Each family has its own way as to the number and shape for making these rice balls. Another example which is not so widely found is that the rice is divided into small amounts and wrapped in the leaves of bamboo grass and such, the shape being much like the wrapped *mochi* for the festival of the 5th Day of the Fifth month, or wrapped rice in magnolia leaves at rice planting time, which seems to me very significant. If I go further into that it will raise two problems, so I will take it up again later and not touch it now, but one matter which anyone would notice is the chopstick standing in this *mitama-no-meshi*, a custom which is found in almost all the examples.

Ordinarily people dislike standing chopsticks upon food, especially

the one chopstick, for it reminds them of standing it up on rice set by the pillow of a corpse, and children who stand their chopsticks in their rice are scolded severely. Nevertheless, on this particular occasion of the *Tama-matsuri* at the close of the year chopsticks are broken and deliberately stuck into the rice in the bowl or one is stuck into each rice ball, a custom which is observed widely. When this sort of thing started or whether it was done from the beginning is a debatable matter, but those practicing the custom know no reason for it nor do they ever think about it. Usually people make twelve rice balls and thirteen in leap year, breaking one chopstick and sticking it into each, the number twelve corresponding to the number of months in the year with thirteen for leap year, which is the same as the twelve pieces of rope tied around *saiwai-gi* [lucky stick of wood] seen in New Year decorations or in the writing of Twelfth Month on the split wood, called *nii-gi* [new split wood], sometimes writing Thirteenth Month in an ordinary year on purpose to bewilder demons. There seems to be no reason for showing the number of months which is already known, but at other houses there are customs of making five, six, nine, or fourteen rice balls, the number by no means fixed at twelve, and sometimes the number of chopsticks stuck into the heaped rice in the bowl is determined by the number of members in the family.

In my view the purpose of heaping the rice offering high in a fine shape is to show that it as well as the *kagami-mochi*, which is placed before a particular *Kami* or man, is the special food for the one to whom it is offered and that it should not be shared with others. I have thought that this shape of food offering piled high symbolized the human heart where the spirit exists, but regardless of how that may be, from olden times people have served this particular food in the similar shape. Although it may seem repugnant to modern people to stand the chopstick in the center, it is an effective way to express such a purpose. Standing up just one chopstick seems to mean it should be broken into two by the one who would use it to eat the food in the way we use *wari-bashi* [ready split chopsticks] now, for there was an old custom of breaking the chopsticks and then throwing them away after the meal outdoors, probably with the purpose of preventing other

people from using them or making a spell with them. There remains the question why they stand up so many chopsticks and make many rice balls to place upon a single plate to offer, and the reason for this may be that they became unable to regard the *Mitama* worshipped at the *Mitama-matsuri* at the close of the year as a single unified ancestral spirit, thinking of it as many souls, and since twelve was a good number, that was used to represent many.

35 *Changes in ideas of Mitama*

There is nothing to debate over the view that our idea of *mitama* has changed little by little with the times. That *mitama-no-meshi* at New Year was not thought to be portentous can be seen from various traditional customs such as mixing it into food at the festival of the Fifth Month, or saving it to parch and eat on the 1st Day of the Sixth Month at the rite for making teeth strong, or using it as a charm for protection from fire or preventing "summer sickness," or mixing it with seeds that are sown to ensure a good harvest. In the northern part of Shinshû there is a day set for laying down the chopsticks which had been stood in the rice for souls, but its date varies according to families. The earliest dates are the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th Day of New Year, or any day before the 7th, when the New Year pine is removed, other days being the 16th Day or the Day of the Horse according to the Zodiac or at some places on the birth date of the head of the family, at which time he takes the rice down from the altar and eats it by himself. In Tōhoku there is an example in which only the oldest son or daughter who is to succeed to the headship of the family is given the offering rice, and other brothers and sisters may not eat it. There is no more fitting custom to insure the bond between ancestor and descendant. Repeating this rite annually at New Year should have been one of the pleasures of old families to insure their long continuance, but in the course of time its significance has diminished, and the rice is placed in the *Senzo* altar, the door of which is tightly closed on New Year days, and afterwards it is used only as charms, and this is really a great change which

can not be explained as other than one reflecting *Bon* rites which were influenced by Buddhism.

If we consider two extremes from the examples side by side it may be clearer. In a certain village at the base of Mt. Chôkai in Akita a place is built onto the *Kami-dana* and called the seat of *Nitama*, silk cocoons are hung above it, and onto it is placed a basket in which twelve rice balls are laid with a new cypress chopstick stuck into each. Just as in the example from Akka, this is done in place of the *matsuri* for *Toshi-gami*. There is a custom in Mizusawa-machi, Iwate, of putting twelve rice balls on the *butsudan* and three red circles are drawn on the white paper on which they are placed. The three circles can be recognized as *mi-tama* [three circles or sacred spirit], and red shows that it was not considered an unauspicious ceremony. This is surely not done in a family where there has been mourning during the year. On the other hand, in one part of Shinshû, at Ohnogawa in Minamiazumi-gun, white rice is piled high and five chopsticks are stood in it on the night of *Toshitori* in families that have had sadness. Neighbors come to pay their respects and they stay up all night as at a wake. In Okôchi-mura at the southern edge of Shimoina-gun, the family that has had a death offers on the altar of *Toshi-gami* a bowl of rice heaped high with a number of chopsticks stood on it, calling it *Hatsu-mitama* [first offering to *Mitama*]. This observance is called *Mitama-matsuri* and the gathering of relatives at the house, *Mitama-mairi* [going to worship the spirit]. In these places there should have been the usual *Senzo-matsuri* celebrated in each family, but as it became customary to carry out rites for the newly departed with increasing courtesy upon that occasion, families that had had no unhappiness would naturally cease observing a similar rite for ancestors, or at least avoid calling it by the same name, particularly at New Year. When we see that this custom of standing a number of chopsticks up in rice and offering it on the *Toshi-gami* altar is exactly like that of offering *mitama-no-meshi* in other regions, we can not doubt that formerly they were the same observance. The question is whether long ago the families which had fresh sadness could celebrate the *Tama-matsuri* on the night between the year's end and the New Year. I hardly think this was permitted, but I have heard

nothing to prove this. If one would like to investigate the matter, he should be able to find plenty of evidence in country districts. In other words, this kind of observance as well as the *Tama-matsuri* at *Bon* is an example in which attachment to a newly departed relative has overpowered the fear of violating the death taboo, while in many other regions the *Tama-matsuri* began to be separated from the New Year ceremonies in order to avoid contamination with mourning for death. At present these two ways are not completely separated and can be compared with each other. This is going to be more difficult to understand or explain as time passes.

36 *The year of mourning and the souls of the newly dead*

The feeling of taboo toward death has declined strikingly in the last one hundred years. The reason is not merely due to advanced social intercourse or the busy life, but to something deeper than that. Aside from the question of right or wrong, this transition must be investigated. I can see that something in the present world is different from that of the past, at least a new tendency has appeared in our mental processes, and if we should ignore this difference, we might fall into a false revival of past things. It is not just because there are plenty of records to prove it, but old fashioned people at present still have this feeling of taboo about death. When a close member of the family died, those who had contact with the body were suddenly bound by a feeling of restraint in their lives. First of all, such people were excluded from taking part in auspicious observances, especially Shintô festivals and ceremonies, the prohibition being very prompt, and it extended to those coming into contact with them and even to those approaching the latter, with certain distinctions, and such people could not serve their lord or take part in worship of *Kami*. Needless to say, this was an unbearable inconvenience in public life. Various steps were taken to circumvent it. At first a house was built for mourners in which anyone in mourning was confined, and he was not permitted to come and go. Since he was unable to get food or fuel during this time, supplies had

to be brought to him from outside. The period was then shortened and some ways to lift restrictions were devised, but there had to be a limit to that, for a man who buried his father one day could by no means be permitted to start working on the next. The third step was to list strict regulations to be kept concerning avoidance of contact with prohibitions in order to soften other trivial restrictions. Common people had maintained a special feeling from the distant past about festivals, worship at shrines, and among annual observances, New Year's time while the sacred rope was hung, and they kept them as times of ritual purity or abstinence, while restrictions in social intercourse on ordinary days were gradually loosened. And at present the restrictions concerning ritual impurity are lightened. In official ceremonies of the Imperial Court, however, it was natural that these various grades of difference were not recognized, and at every ceremony there would be many officials who could not attend. According to diaries of the Imperial family of late medieval times it was a fixed custom that only noblemen whose both parents were living were invited to the ceremony at the palace on the 15th Day of the Seventh Month. Among common people this difference was also observed, those who had no living parents abstained from eating flesh during *Bon* while those with one parent abstained only on the 14th Day, and those with both parents living ate fish on both the 14th and 15th Days', but those abstaining did not remain apart, and they passed these days unconcernedly with others and worshipped at the *Tama-dana* of the ancestors with them. Those who had lost a parent during the year before mingled naturally with the rest.

Probably there were two distinct kinds of observances originally for the *Senzo-matsuri* at *Bon*, one for such lonely families and another for those where the parents of the head of the main family were long-lived and everybody enjoyed gathering. But along with the spread of Buddhism and the changes it brought, people began to emphasize the services for the dead for those near, and they began to regard worshipping ancestors as an accompanying rite. No such confusion arose, however, in the observance of New Year. When the fresh pine boughs were set up at the door and the sacred rope hung, nobody from a family in

mourning came to pass under it. The Buddhist priest did not come to pay his New Year call until after the 4th Day even though he was not in mourning. And usually before the ceremony for *Toshitori* took place, people went to the home where death had occurred during the year to offer sympathy. The greeting upon such an occasion might be, "You must be lonely to have such an unusual year," or "This is a lonely *Toshitori* for you," as if to say they should not take it unkindly that in the outside world New Year was awaited with gladness, or that they should not regret being unable to join in the happiness or be lonely because they could not mingle with their friends while they celebrated a happy New Year. And families which were blessed carried out the usual observance for their ancestors. We can see from this that there were two kinds of *Tama-matsuri* formerly, and the *Bon* festival had them mixed. The souls of those who died during the past year are called *ara-mitama*. At the *Bon* festival such a spirit is called *ara-sonjo* or *nii-jôryô*, which people usually think of as meaning a new soul, but it comes from *ara-imî* 荒忌 [strict taboo] and *ara-mitama* 荒御霊 [unsettled soul], something unfitting for a tranquil celebration of *Senzo-matsuri*, and people think a different kind of observance is necessary to help such a soul rest at peace in the after life. There were many lower class Buddhist priests who felt nothing of the defilement of death and they usually did services for the newly dead, but in spite of that the observance for the dead at *Toshikoshi* has continued to be held according to a traditional custom other than Buddhist. From this I think we might be able to detect the form belonging to the past.

37 *Shoryo and Mitama*

As each of the two festivals for souls, those at *Bon* and New Year, tended to become one-sided, our people began to emphasize the differences and showed an inclination to overlook the parts that were in common. One matter that was noticeable was that the soul was referred to as *Mitama* at New Year and called *Shôro* or *Shôryô San* at *Bon* until they were gradually thought of as being different, but they were both

the same soul called by a Japanese word or a Chinese word. Many people in Tokushima prefecture and other places call ancestral souls *Mitama Sama* during New Year instead of *Hotoke Sama*, and at *Bon*, also, the same word *Mitama* is used by some people. For instance, at present as well as in the past, when people make a special visit at *Bon* to their living parents who are in good health, they present them with fish and other food, and they say they are serving *Iki-mitama* or observing *Iki-bon* [living *Bon*]. It may be because living people can hardly be called *shōryō* [spirits of the dead], and there is another example from Kawagoe near Tokyo where the first *Bon* after a death is called *Bon* for *Ara-mitama*. In the central part of Banshū, where I was born, they called the round rice balls made of red beans and rice *mitama* and placed them on taro²⁰ leaves as an offering on the 15th at *Bon*, which was another way of calling it *mitama-no-meshi*. The same custom is found around Maizuru in Tango and in villages on the southern tip of the Izu peninsula, but at the latter place they call them *mitama* and the way they stick chopsticks made of flax stems into them is the same as for *mitama-no-meshi* at New Year. Nowadays we can see these round rice balls frequently, but formerly they seem to have been made only at such times, and in some parts of Tōhoku they consider *nitama* to mean *nigiri-meshi* [rice balls] in this form. These rice balls were not always made perfectly round elsewhere, for there were some three-cornered ones whose edges came to a point, but they were made a little different in shape, at any rate, from the rice balls in lunches on ordinary days or made more carefully.

It is not necessary to say which word is the older, *shōryō* or *mitama*. The question is rather why such a difficult Chinese word to pronounce was picked up when we already had an old, good word in our language, and in order to discuss this we must go beyond the problem of making a distinction between *Bon* and the New Year to a minor reason for employing the new word, which eventually gave rise to a contrast between the two words. This may not be a typical example of the confusion in the meaning of our native language caused by adopting Chinese words, but if we do not trace the way in which the meaning of the

word *mitama* changed, it will not be possible to settle the important matter of where the soul goes after death. There was a great need for educated Japanese in the past to use difficult Chinese characters. The period continued long in which letters and diaries had to be written entirely with those characters. Men struggled to learn how to write a character for what they heard, and whether good or bad they followed examples written previously, and later they often pronounced it in a different way. The word *mitama* was a Japanese word from ancient times, but unfortunately there was no Chinese character that could be applied precisely to it. Thus in the *Oogishô* by Kiyosuke we find the following explanation of the *Tama-matsuri*:

Genin wa mitama matsuri to zo môsu. Kôke ni wa nosaki no matsuri to iu.

[Common people call this *Mitama-matsuri*, and the Imperial household calls it *Nosaki-no-matsuri*].

This shows that those who used *Mitama-matsuri* in speaking were the uneducated. It was not because there was no suitable character for it from the past. In *Nihon shoki* the word *mitama* appears frequently and each time it is designated by the characters 御霊. This is a literal translation, a word which was created in our country. We find it in the term *Kôso-jingi-no-mitama* [the Spirits of the founder of the Imperial family and Shintô deities] and *Tennô-no-mitama* [the soul of the Emperor], and thus it is applied to the souls both of the living and of the other world. But for inevitable reasons in later times these two characters 御霊 became difficult to use for the word *mitama*. Anyone who reads the history of our country will doubtless recall that at the beginning of the period following the removal of the Imperial capital to Kyoto, when it was on the rapid road to prosperity, many calamities occurred one after another. People of that day associated them with changes of government that had occurred and terrified, they concluded that the indignant souls of those who had met with violent death were returning to curse the capital. This may have been combined with feelings toward the new religion that had sprung up. With the explanation that the resentment had brought evil, great Buddhist services

of *shôryô* but the popularized form of *sonrei*.

39 Three kinds of Shoryo

At present there are three different concepts included in the term *shôryô* used at *Bon*. Lately people having the ability to make fine distinctions have begun to feel it difficult to express them by a single word and various modifiers are added to it, or in some places several meanings were recognized and this word was applied to only one of them with the result that the original meaning of *shôryô* was gradually overlooked. I have already mentioned how the soul of one who died during the year was called *ara-sonjo*, *waka-jôro*, or *nii-jôryô*, and people were inclined to decorate the altar with special beauty or set up a special altar for such a spirit at *Bon*, and in such families they would explain that the word *shôryô* referred to the newly dead. This has lead to a considerable change in the idea of ancestors in our country, a matter which I will explain in detail later.

Another idea is expressed by *hoka-jôryô* in southern Kyûshû. Oddly enough, Tôhoku is the only area in which this is seldom heard, but in the wide area of Japan west of Kantô we see it with slight differences in name according to region, such as *Hoka-Don*, [other spirit], *Tomo-Don* [companion spirit], *O-kyaku-botoke* [guest *hotoke*], *Muen-Sama*, and even *Gaki* [hungry spirit], and there are differences in attitudes along with the differences in terms. By this we can see that, in general, spirits other than those who had to be worshipped in a family at *Bon* used that opportunity to assemble. In villages in one part of Gifu prefecture these homeless spirits were called *Issai-shôryô Sama* [All Souls]. On Iki island they were called *Sange-bange*, which may have been their way of pronouncing *Sangai-banrei*.²² These were new ideas which we did not expect to creep into the faith of ancestor worship in our land. Just as there is the Feast of All Souls among Christians on October 4 [sic], this is a strong feature of Buddhism, which we must recognize as big progress in a faith that transcends race. The Buddhist priest has

reason to put emphasis upon *Segaki* services [feeding hungry spirits] for those homeless spirits as a central rite at *Bon*, building a special altar for them at each temple, but of course this was not according to our old custom, and while Buddhist preachers admitted this distinction, they always tried to coordinate their practices with our feeling of reverence for our ancestors more than their teachings allowed. This was different from the attitude of Christian propagandists nearly 500 years ago.

Thus, according to the degree of Buddhist influence there are different explanations for unattached spirits in various regions. And there is a marked difference among families in their treatment of them, but since nobody has made a comparative study of the matter, everyone follows what is done in his region and is inclined to conclude that this is the common practice throughout the land. However, when we examined in detail the practices concerning these spirits, we found there was no common concept among them. Spirits which have been called hungry demons are the same as those called *Fuke-jôro* or *Tomo-Don* in southern Kyûshû, hungry souls who have no family to offer them food, and they are said to snatch food offerings made on family altars, so in order to carry out hospitality undisturbed toward family spirits, some think it is necessary to offer the outsiders something to keep them from being a nuisance. Besides those outsider spirits with no relationship to the family, the souls of the family members who died without marrying are called *Muen-botoke*, too, in Kantô and other places and are worshipped separately. In villages along the banks of the river *Ki-no-kawa* in Wakayama prefecture the term *O-kyaku-botoke* refers to souls of near relatives and sons and daughters who married into other families. Feelings about these three types differ although there is a similarity in the way in which they are worshipped at *Bon*, with a *Bon* altar set up to worship them apart from the one for ancestral *Mitama* regularly worshipped at each house. Compared to the vast but unified concept of All Souls in the west, the Japanese idea of worshipping outsider spirits has no unity and there is no clear explanation for many of them entering each house to be worshipped.

40 *Persimmon leaves and lotus leaves*

When we compare the location, construction, and use of the *Tama-dana* at *Bon* with the *Toshi-dana* at New Year found in various regions, we see that the former has many times more varieties, and one of the reasons for this is the attention given the various *Muen-botoke* and *Hoka-jôryô*, but whether this is due to the idea of *Sangai-banrei* from Buddhist teachings is no simple matter to decide. If my inference that only the purest and most genuine among the *Mitama* of each family have been identified with *Toshi-no-kami* and worshipped at the New Year altar can be established, *Bon* seems to be a time when the spirits are divided in some way more easily because of the season and the people connected with them. Since an official inspection of the religion of each family was instituted in the Recent Past, every family, however slight its faith may have been, had to be connected with a temple of some sect of Buddhism, and then the *matsuri* before the *Bon* altar in the home suddenly began to take on the odor of Buddhism. Some even say that the call of the Buddhist priest to recite sutra before the *Bon* altar was used as a means of spying. This religion had not recognized the unified ancestral spirit and put emphasis solely upon memorial services for individuals. Accordingly, as years passed, the number of souls that were neglected was bound to multiply. At the same time, the souls of men who had the misfortune of dying while on a journey or spirits who had no family to which to return, also increased in number. From long ago people of Japan have had a dread of meeting such homeless spirits. Religious ceremonies were carried out preceeding some great public event or at the change of seasons in order to attract as many as possible of those spirits to one place and not to leave them scattered about, and later they were commended to the authority of some big, powerful shrines. I think the terms *Misaki* [forerunner] and *Waka-miya* [young *Kami*] came to be used for these unsettled spirits as a result of this, *misaki* meaning a retainer or one who worked under the command of a great *Kami*. It is clear that there were two kinds of *Muen Sama* among spirits, and these *Misaki* were different from the *Muen Sama*

of families who were spirits without offerings for their worship. Since the study of the dim, concealed other world had not advanced, ordinary men could not mark exact divisions, and they had various conceptions, some people harboring ideas in their hearts about wretched souls like starved demons seen in old picture books and others only thinking of the pathetic souls of their relatives who died young, such as unmarried sisters and brothers of their grandparents and a beloved daughter of greatgrandparents. This confusion was clearly the cause of unhappiness in various families. If Buddhism could offer any consolation for such grief, we must admit it had some merit.

Formerly in remote places the old woman who had no children was taunted by the epithet Old Persimmon Leaf. There surely is nobody any more who would use such a cruel expression, but those who have been called by it remember it sometimes. One reason I wanted to write a book about ancestors was because there was no reason for the condition that created such lonely hearts. A persimmon leaf was formerly used simply as a dish. Even after all kinds of pottery and round wooden dishes were easy to come by, there was no change in the old fashioned way of using the persimmon leaf for offerings to homeless spirits. Later taro leaves were frequently used instead and especially the lotus leaf, because of its connection with Buddhist ideas, and it is still used in many houses. There is an intention even today to set a line of demarcation between various homeless spirits and proper ancestral spirits, so even if they are worshipped at the same altar, the offering on the persimmon leaf is placed on a lower level and at the edge of the altar, or when the rice is put into offering dishes, it is prepared last, but when it comes time to offer it, the one on the persimmon leaf is set up first. Furthermore, when it is lifted down from the altar, it is not eaten by the family, as other offerings, but gathered into one dish and thrown out, all of which clearly shows the discrimination with which it is handled. It can not be said that this treatment evolved from the *Tama-matsuri* at the beginning of autumn was present from the start, but that it could be considered as a result of Buddhism or the stimulation received from it.

41 *The permanent altar for souls*

Unless we make a detailed distribution map we can not say for sure that the custom of building a special *Shôryô* altar at *Bon* each year is far less common than that of setting up a New Year altar. For example, on the streets of Tokyo an altar was set up at each house for *Shôgatsu Sama*, while most families used the ordinary *butsudan* for the *Tamamatsuri* at *Bon*. Taking my home as an example, I have vivid memories of how we spread a fresh piece of matting on the *butsudan* and hung twigs of ground cherry, persimmon, and chestnut from a rope above it so it gave a different impression, but it was only the same ordinary altar decorated. One might think this started in Edo because many people lived in temporary houses while there on a journey, but in many widely scattered old households in rural districts similar customs could be seen. In other words, it was not just a way to save having to build a new altar each time but in order to fulfill a desire to meet the ancestors more often than at *Bon* and the year's end, and it was convenient to have a permanent altar set up in one corner of the living room. As ceremonies for anniversaries and memorial services for near relatives became more frequent, such a plan was necessary, but without a doubt the permanent altar was originally built for the more distant ancestral spirits because in most places a new special altar was set up for the newly dead. There is plenty of additional evidence for this. Some people may have a wrong idea because the name *butsudan* has come to be the standard word for the ancestral altar, and we can see in the *haiku* by Kyorai: "*Tama-dana no oku natsukashi ya oya no kao* [In the interior of the *Tama-dana* my dear parents' faces]," that originally the *butsudan* was not a different one from the *Tama-dana*.

When we recite this *haiku* by Kyorai, we get a natural impression of how after he was old, on a day in *Bon*, he saw his parents' faces in a vision in the usual *butsudan*, not a temporary one decorated with flowers and greenery. Some who explained this line said that it showed that only during *Bon* the *butsudan* was called *Tama-dana*, which seems to be a random guess, but if a permanent altar was already furnished,

there would have been no reason to set up a different one at *Bon*. We can conjecture that in the past there was some special occasion when it was necessary to set up a new altar other than the ordinary one, and as it came to be decorated more and more beautifully with flowers and lights, people began to have an idea that it was a special altar necessary for the *Bon* festival, something different from the usual altar, and in some regions they were not inclined to use the permanent altar at *Bon*. At such places they would remove the family tablets from inside the *butsudan* at *Bon* and lay them respectfully to rest upon the new altar, leaving the other unoccupied. In the district of Iida in Shinshû they call the empty altar *O-Rusui Sama* [caretaker] and leave an offering there. Around Sannohe in Ooshû they call it *Kara-dana* [empty altar] and also make an offering of rice at it. Sometimes young people forget to do this, and some old person reminds them, "Have you given anything to *Yadoi*?" *Yadoi* being dialect for caretaker shows that they think some spirit remains in the altar, but since the polite form is not used in the expression, they are not thinking of their usual deity.

42 *The word butsudan*

There may be no direct relationship between calling anyone without distinction a *hotoke* after he dies and calling the *Tama-dana* a *butsudan*, but because of these two rather related words, people often make the mistake of thinking of *Bon* as a Buddhist festival and that its observance began after Buddhism entered Japan. Recently when some families decided that *Senzo-matsuri* and funeral rites should no longer be carried out according to Buddhism, they suddenly got rid of their *butsudan* and combined them with the *Kami-dana*, but instead of this being a restoration of the past, it was a new plan about which there remained much to be reformed. In my parental home, the Matsuoka family, my grandmother was a Buddhist, so offerings were made according to Buddhism, but at the end of the third year of mourning after her death, all the Buddhist fixtures, the sutra scrolls, and ancestral tablets were thrown into the river, leaving the *butsudan* just an ordinary shelf. Shintoists

did not like to call the wooden tablet for the names of the dead *ihai*, and in their stead made squares of white wood on which they wrote in charcoal ink the name of the one who had died, and these they laid reverently to the right and left on the *Kami* altar, calling them *Mitama*. On the day of a memorial service the *Mitama* who was to be worshipped especially was placed in front at a slightly lower level, and it was removed respectfully from the case in which it was enclosed, the name written on the piece of wood was displayed, and an act of reverence was performed toward it. I think this may have been a recent kind of ritual. The characters *ihai* 位牌 were also used in China, and there is no doubt that this word is separable from Buddhism, but besides having acquired the scent of Buddhism from long years of incense smoke, the *kaimyô* [posthumous Buddhist name] carved upon its surface was offensive to those not of that faith. And there is no historical justification for it, either. In fact, this name was given those who believed in Buddhism and who had all their lives kept the *Gokai* [five commandments] or *Jikkai* [ten commandments].²³ From early times there were voices raised in criticism, calling it an outrageous custom after a man's death and without his consent to take the liberty of giving him a name whose meaning could not be understood and one much too difficult to remember. But most of the common folk had another feeling, for they thought that by the virtue of this name they could realize a clear distinction between life and death and could feel their sorrow being elevated with time until they could look up and venerate the dead as the family guardian spirit forever, and perhaps partly for this reason some people would use this Buddhist name after death although they had Shintô burial rites carried out. In spite of all this, that the individuality of each ancestor is maintained forever in Buddhist services is incompatible with our concept of a unified ancestral spirit.

One of the more practical problems is in what form the families which have parted from Buddhism according to the new principle of religious freedom will carry on their ancestral festival in the future. The *Tama-matsuri* at *Bon* was fortunately not abandoned along the way in my parent's home, so at sunset on the 13th Day of the Seventh Month we joined the groups of children of our village, dressed in fresh,

neat festival attire, to go to meet the souls of our ancestors in the cemetery, and in the midst of the smell of incense that the others were offering we raised our springs of *sakaki* instead of *shikimi* and offered washed rice, and then returned together, carrying our lighted lanterns, but in spite of this, we felt as though we had been left out when we heard the voice of sutras read and the little bell in neighboring houses. In some regions where people began to feel uneasy about performing rites for souls at *Bon* because of its Buddhist flavor they transferred the *Tamamatsuri* from *Bon* to the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, which were days of Imperial Ancestral observances, rendering *Bon* just a day of rest, and without a doubt this tendency is indirectly making people lose interest in the worship of ancestral spirits. In tracing the long road our folk have traveled, we must respect what has spread among the majority of them even if it has been saturated with religion from abroad. And if it should prove necessary to make reforms, we must take them into consideration hereafter.

43 *Bon and hokai*

The problem is more simple than it looks. If scholars would give their attention to only two or three points they have not noticed so far and would take a little action, it would be a good idea. For example, there are some considerably old records about the Buddhist service called *Urabon-e*, which was performed in public on the 15th Day of the Seventh Month by the lunar calendar. There never has been the least bit of proof for the explanation by Buddhists, which is well known and usually accepted, that this is the origin of the name *Bon* attached to several days before and after it. Was there such usage as Ullambana in Sanskrit shortened to *Bon*? Or is there an example in China in which the character *Bon* 盆 is written instead of *Urabon* 盂蘭盆? Or did it happen to be used popularly among Buddhists and laymen in our country because the word *bon* sounded like a foreign word? It is a pity there has been no attempt other than to repeat the same simple explanation from long ago without considering these questions.

My explanation is hardly more than an opinion, but in records prior to medieval times the character 盆 was used for *Bon* or *Bon* offerings. The 盆 as well as 盆 seems to have been a pottery vessel for food, but the question is whether women and children called the former *bon* from the start or whether it, like the present word *gozaru* [to be], was read phonetically from the first by intellectuals who said *bon* to appear smart and later it spread widely among common people, but the answer can not be found if we refer only to writings using Chinese characters. In poems of medieval times the term *boni* and *boni-suru* are certainly found.

*Watatsumi ni oya o tsukiirete kono nushi no
Bonisuru miru zo aware nakikeru.*

[I feel pity when I see the man who pushed his father into the sea making an offering to him at *boni*].²⁴

From this we can see that by medieval times the word *boni* was used widely, but the writer of these lines was a high ranking Buddhist priest. We do not know that ordinary women and children were all saying it. On the other hand, we can find at present at least one genuine Japanese word which is of older origin than *bon*. I feel that it must have been handed down for a long time, for it appears in the most remote places, far from the capital, where there could have been no imitation or comparison, such as in the various parts of Tosa where they called *hōkai* the fire they lighted and burned at the entrance to their homes on the three nights of *Bon*, the 14th, 15th, and 16th. Just as what was called *hashira-taimatsu* [pillar torch] in other regions, they write *hōkaibi* 法界火 or *hōka-e* 放火會 with the brilliant sight of fires on the tops of poles in mind, and some people say it belongs to *Hōka-e* 奉火會, a fire festival to worship Heaven, one of its special features being the offering of washed rice and finely cut cucumber placed at the foot of the pole, and children receive the remains of the burnt pole to make the fire when they cook rice together in the *Bon-hagama* [*Bon* kettle], about which there is a folk belief that if they eat that rice they will be protected from "summer sickness." Around Tatsuta in Yamato there is a word *hōkai-bi*. This word only refers to the lantern which is lit and hung on the veranda at *Bon*, and there is a rather unusual tradition

that this is for the comfort of the spirit of Akechi Mitsuhide, and they also say if a wart is pinched three times with chopsticks of *Hôkai Sama* and then thrown into the river, the wart will go away, which shows that it had something to do with food. In *Nagasaki-shi-shi* the *Hôkai* of the harbor district is mentioned, saying that outsider spirits were worshipped at one side of the *Shôryô* altar with food and decorations similar to what we have already discussed about *Hoka-jôryô*. This *Hôkai* rice is removed twice, once in the morning and once in the evening, but nobody in the family, not even men and women working there, likes to eat it, and outcasts or poor people come with baskets or buckets hung from poles to gather it, going from street to street, somehow resembling the gatherer of offerings at *Bon* in Edo, who called out, "*Omukae, omukae* (here we come, here we come)," at midnight of the 15th, a custom which is said to have started in the *Hôreki* era.

At the other end of Japan in the three prefectures, Aomori, Iwate, and Akita, there is still a *hokai* observance kept widely, which is performed before graves, when food is clearly the central feature and it also has a connection with beggars. Traces of this custom can be recognized in the three other prefectures of Tôhoku, in Kantô, in Echigo, and across the straits in Hokkaido there is a song for the *Bon* dance heard at Suttsu, Hakodate, and Muroran:

Bon no jûsan nichi ya hokeya suru ban ge da

Azuki-kowameshi mame-moyashi

[On the 13th of *Bon* we do *hokai* at night,

Red beans in rice and bean sprouts]

In Tsugaru and Nambu this observance is usually carried out on the evening of the 13th Day, sometimes early on the 14th, calling it *hokai*, or twice on the same day, in the morning and in the evening, or even earlier on the 7th they do a *hokai*, each family having its own time and way, except for the point that it is always finished before the principal rite at the *Bon* altar in the house. What is conspicuous is the *hokai* altar set up before the grave stone, the matting made of bulrush or water-oat spread out, and all kinds of food offerings on it, with soaked rice or powdered rice in a liquid poured over it. I have already explained that this is called performing *ara-neko* or *arare*. The

muddy offerings scattered about on the ground must have looked unsightly, for we read in a description by a writer in the past that he thought it would have been better to put the offering on the *butsudan* in the house on a rainy day. Usually dogs or crows came to eat it, but beggars might get there first to gather it up and carry it off. Such a sight was so usual in the past that some people explained *hokai* as meaning beggar, but recently they say beggars are seldom seen around there.

44 *The difference between hokai and matsuri*

The word *hoito*, meaning beggar, is found in Tôhoku at present, but the name *hokai-bito* is no longer found anywhere. The verb *hogau* or *hokai-suru* is used in the same ceremonial sense as in the past in various places from the east to the west. For example, in Akita *hogau* usually means to offer food to the spirit, especially to set it before the grave at *Bon*, although sometimes in fun they use *hogau*, referring to serving a dinner to a guest. Some families had special *hokai* food containers in which the *hokai* offerings were carried to the grave, but it was a more usual sight to see them carrying the offerings wrapped in woven reed or water-oat and to hear them say, “*Ano haka nimo hogae* [serve food to that grave, too].” The characters 祠 and 祀 in *Ruijû myôgi shô* are read *hogau*, *matsuru*, or *inoru*; in *Iroha jirui shô* the character *matsuri* 祭 is read *hoga(f)u*; in *Engi shiki* the part about regulations in the Imperial Household, *Oo-Tono-matsuri* 大殿祭 is read *Oo-tono-hoga(h)i*; and in *Shinsen jikyô* the character 祠 has a note to the effect that it is the Spring Festival and is read *hoka(f)u* 保加布. From these sources we can see that *hokai* is an old Japanese word that was already in use for various religious ceremonies over a thousand years ago.

But what I want to consider is whether these two terms, *hokai* and *matsuri*, are really the same word in Japanese, and to do this I must digress a little because it is necessary to go into more detail to ascertain the origin of *Bon*. In the travelogue *Kyûai zuihitsu*, written one hundred and sixty or seventy years ago, there is an explanation of a custom in

what is now called Miyazaki prefecture:

Tsune ni sake o nomi cha o susuru ni, mina sono hajime o kami ni sonauru gi o nasu. Kore o hokai to iu — kogo nari

[Before drinking wine or sipping tea they perform a ceremony of offering it to *Kami*. They call this *hokai* — an old word]

And that custom has not disappeared. Around Takachiho it seems that deeply pious people dip a finger into *sake* before they drink it and flick it three times into the air, which they call *hokau*. Offering *sake* to *Kami* is called *age-hoke*, performed in a simplified way, in which a little funnel of bamboo is filled and hung from the branch of a tree, or a small amount is poured into the current of the stream. The latter way is called *nagashi-omiki* or *koboshi-hokai*.

In Tsugaru and northern Akita in Tôhoku there is a ceremony called *Ke-bokai* among hunters that is something different from the *hokai* of *Bon*. After they have dressed the bear they have caught and divided it, they strip off the hide and put it on wrong side out, hold a sprig of *sakaki*, and repeat a prayer. They say this is to appease the spirit of the bear or to mourn for it, and then they make an offering of part of its entrails to *Kami* and the rest they divide among themselves to eat. Elsewhere, in the southern part of Kumamoto prefecture in Kyûshû, after a wild boar was shot, there was a custom called *Ke-matsuri* which was similar to the *Ke-bokai* of Tôhoku. Something that is surely a variation coming from the medieval *Ya-matsuri* [Arrow festival] is pointing a gun in the direction of the game which is shot and shooting into the air as they sing,

*Oku no Yama-no-kami san, naka no Yama-no-kami san, shimo no Yama-no-kami san, hokai hazushi wa atte mo, uketori hazushi wa nai yô ni, uketori kudasai. Namuamida.*²⁵

[Spirit in yonder hill, Spirit in nearer hill, Spirit in the hill below, even if our aim is poor, accept our arrow without fail. *Namuamida*].

In this region offering *sake* to *Kami* is called *hokai*, but in addition to that, shooting a gun toward the sky was called giving an offering [*hokau*] to the *Yama-no-kami*.

In villages in a mountainous area northwest of Kyoto there was a custom called the first entrance into the forest on the 4th day of the

and *wi* became mixed up, *hokai* was written 外居 [*hokawi*]. At present *hokai* are in all kinds of shapes, but all of them are made of wood, usually lacquered black on the outside and red inside so they can be used year after year, but formerly it was too expensive for ordinary people to make new ones out of white wood each time, so that was why they began making simply pottery ones, written 盆 or 盆, and as it happened to be identified with *Bon* of *Urabon-e*, I think it became popular.

I am still looking for an example of 盆 being read *hokai*, but I have not found one. In various medieval records there is a phrase: 盆 *o okuru* [sending the 盆], which meant sending various kinds of food to the temple and the grave, and food was put into pottery vessels and carried in a wooden box, but what we called those vessels in ordinary Japanese is not known, for upper class people were already accustomed to the Chinese reading of characters in those days. When we look back further into the past, we find that many pottery vessels were used in religious ceremonies. There was a great variety of shapes among them for which more than ten words in Chinese characters were used in *Engi shiki*. If the name for all of these had been only one and the same in Japanese, we think that they would hardly have listed so many of them, but the fact is that later there was confusion in applying Japanese to those Chinese characters, one character being read in various ways or various characters being read one way. Take for example the character 盆 that had *hiragana* syllables placed beside it to show it could be read *he*, *hiraka*, *hotogi*, or *sarake*, but for the latter two readings frequently the characters 缶 and 醒 respectively were also used, and sometimes the character 盆 is listed with them. Before a *hokai* was always a vessel made of wood, we think there were pottery *hokai* which were represented by either 盆 or 盆, but I have no proof of it. *Wamyôshô* says the character 盆 is the same as 缶 and read *hotoki* 保度岐; in [*Shinsen*] *Jikyô* and other dictionaries 盆 is read *hotoshi* or *hotogi*. In *Chiribukuro*, Vol. VIII, written in the Kamakura period, there is the following entry:

Hotoki wa urabon no toki mochiuru mono nari, seken no kichiji ni wa irô majiki mono ka, 盆 wa kibutsu no hitotsu no sugata

nite kikyô ni tsûyô suru ka—bon no ji oba hiraka to yomu, hotoki wa 缶 no ji o yomu, saredomo kayoite tomo ni hotoki to ii narawaseru ni ya

[Hotoki is used at Urabon. It may not be used in society for an auspicious occasion. And 盆 is a kind of vessel that may be used at both auspicious and inauspicious occasions. The character 盆 is read *hiraka* and 缶 is read *hotoki*, but it is usual to call them both *hotoki*].

At any rate, until that time 盆 was much like what they called *hotoki*, and we can be sure it was not something flat like our *o-bon* [tray].

46 *The origin of the word hotoke*

I believe it would not be absurd now to present my second theory, that the custom of calling every departed soul *hotoke* began from the food offering in the rite, because it was put into a vessel called *hotoki*, this having occurred in folk customs at *Bon* in medieval times. There are a number of directions from which we can approach this problem. We can see that *hoto* could be the pronunciation of 浮屠 [*futo*] or 佛陀 [*butsuma*, Buddha], but we have not the slightest idea why the *ke* accompanies it. There are some rather arbitrary views, which we distrust, such as *futo-ke* 浮屠家 perhaps being the original or the Korean habit of adding suffixes, while the monk Keichû, who was a profound scholar of the Kokugaku School, timidly suggested that the *ke* of *hoto-ke* really is *ki* [tree], a word referring to the character 草 *kusa* [grass] in *tamikusa* or *aohitogusa* [people]. Another point to notice is that the word *hotoke* was not found widely throughout the land, but as it was used in the capital and frequently by men of letters, it gradually became familiar to the ears of people; however, in the far extremities of the southwest and northeast of Japan there are still many country folk who use this word only with the image of Buddha in mind or with some other feeling. On the island of Tsushima one of the household deities is called *Hotake*. Since there is a difference in the sound of the vowel, it may not be a good example, but further south on Yakunoshima the

wooden tablet set up by the grave is called *hotoke*. On this island they usually call a memorial service a *bodai*, and each year a larger *hotoke* is placed behind the grave until for the final thirty-third year service a twelve-foot *hotoke* is erected. And the *ihai* is called *Makura-botoke* [pillow *hotoke*], which is probably used for the newly dead, and an ordinary *ihai* would be called a *hotoke*. Building an altar to worship souls at *Bon* is called *Hotoke-mukae*, which is the same as in central Japan, but this is probably because they transfer the *ihai* to it, for there is another term *Shôryô-mukae* used for it; in other words, they considered the wooden tablet to be just the symbol of the seat where the spirit came to rest.

Elsewhere, distant from here in the prefectures of Oou the memorial service in general is referred to as *Hotoke-kaki* [writing on the *Hotoke*], and on Sado island there are places where they say they have *Hotoke San* written. In other words, *hotoke* refers to the grave-side tablet in that region. At Kitakata in Aizu they refer to the tablet by the grave as the *Hotoke-bô* [*hotoke* stick]. They cut a fresh small tree in the woods, scrape the bark off one part of it, and have the posthumous name written on it. Here they erect this tree trunk on the funeral day and on the first anniversary, while in other regions it is customary to set up the same kind of symbol at the grave on the thirty-third memorial day, calling it *Hotoke-bô* or *Toriage-botoke* [concluding *Hotoke*] at the last service for the dead. At various places in Tôhoku they have the Buddhist priest at the temple write on small wooden tablets on the day of the *Segaki* service at *Bon* and call them *Masa-botoke* [*Hotoke* on a piece of wood cut with the grain]. Sometimes these tablets were in the shape of *Jizô Son* or *Amida Sama*, nailed over each other on the walls of the temple in the sacred spot, these, too, being called *Masabotoke*, and they seem to have been made to represent *Hotoke* as nearly as possible. The tablets used at the famous *Jizô-e* [festival] at Mt. Osore in Nambu are like small, plain shingles on which are written prayers for happiness and they do not resemble a Buddhist image. On the *Tama-dana* in various houses there may be an even simpler way, that of having the names of seven Buddhas written on seven little pieces of wood and sticking them into a rush mat, as is done on the Oga peninsula, calling

them *Kanagara-botoke* [wood-shavings *hotoke*]. Setting up the cluster of seven *Hotoke* at the entrance to a cemetery is a custom everywhere. When the villagers joined together to have these made, perhaps a stone statue was erected, but at each family in mourning they had the seven small tablets placed in a row just for temporary use. Until days when stone masons could easily carve Buddhist images, *Hotoke* for ordinary people were wood with writing on them, as can be seen on any number of picture scrolls. There formerly was this deep relationship between statues and wooden slabs by the grave.

47 *Various hotoke*

It is certain that the *Hotoke-bô* was a thing to be worshipped, but in older times it was not regarded as an object of established faith like various Buddhist images, and even now it is strange that it is mentioned without an honorific attached. There are many evidences of this, but we can not explain them in detail, so we will let the matter rest with this comment. Recently two or three scholars called attention to the *Mairi-no-hotoke* [*Hotoke* to be worshipped], and as this term just happens to have the word *hotoke* in it, it is taken as something connected with Buddhism, but worshipping this *Mairi-no-hotoke* is close to the *Senzo-matsuri* within the *maki*, close to *Iwai-jin* or the ancestral deities in other places for which the head family is responsible. There is an account in *Minzokugaku nempô*, Vol. III, of an example in Esashi-gun of the festival for the *Mairi-no-hotoke* every year on the 15th Day of the Tenth Month by the lunar calendar in which all the families of the kin group are invited to participate. White *dango* [dumplings] are the offering upon this occasion, but when they are removed from the altar, only the head of the family and his oldest son may eat them, the other brothers and sisters being forbidden to receive them, which is like the distribution of rice for the souls at *Toshikoshi*. There is a tradition that those who receive the *dango* must go to worship on that same feast day every year for life or they will incur a curse, and that is why the others may not eat the offering. Since the figure of *Mairi-no-*

hotoke is called *Kuro-honzon* [black image] or *Kuro-botoke* [black *Hotoke*], we assume that it was made of wood, but as far as we know its name has never been clear and those figures that are worshipped are decayed and worm-eaten. Some worshipped a scroll on which there were pictures and writing, something which was a basis for their faith handed down with their genealogy, but for a long time it was the object of reverence by people who could not read it.

In Aomori prefecture the heir to the family is called *hotoke-mochi* [one who has *Hotoke*]. This is different in meaning from the term applied around Kyoto to orphans or those who have lost a single parent in contrast to those with two parents, for it is applied to one who is to succeed to the family headship, so this *hotoke* does not refer to the dead. And various other *hotoke* have been worshipped in families during the course of time. It is said that *Kabakawa-botoke* [birch bark *Hotoke*] are pictures of a deity drawn on a scroll of birch bark instead of paper, but I have never had an occasion to pay my respects to an authentic one. It may be something like *Mairi-no-hotoke* that is found in villages where there is no temple, something hung up and worshipped on the day of a funeral. Since both of these are in the care of heads of old families, we should consider them together. There is also something known as *Jûgatsu-botoke* [*Hotoke* of the Tenth Month]. Some say this is the same as *Oshira-botoke* or *Kagi-botoke* [hook *Hotoke*], the festival of *Oshira Sama* being on the 16th Day of the Third and Ninth Months, which is close to the day for the festival of *Mairi-no-hotoke* in Esashi-gun. While these festivals are carried out on certain fixed days year after year, they could hardly avoid having celebrations on other days occasionally. *Oshira-botoke*, for instance, was worshipped and entertained on the regular festival day in spring and autumn, when women and children who had some connection with it gathered to enjoy themselves together with the deity, listening to the traditional story and looking at the dance accompanying it, while in recent years they took other occasions to petition that *Kami* by performing divination. It has been, of course, due to the activities of professional blind *itako* or *miko* [shamans] that wives and daughters have gradually relinquished some of their religious roles at *matsuri* in their homes, but in spite of that there

are still some simple old practices of divining or explaining the will of *Kami* in the home. One example would be how in former times they determined the direction to carry the coffin to a burial spot. They say that the man at the head of the procession would raise the *Hotoke-bô* above eye-level, rotate it between his hands as he intoned a formula, and then start in the direction the hook on the stick pointed when it stopped. We have not seen this actually done, so it may be just a story, but one of the names for *Oshira* was *Kagi-botoke*, and many of them have a face drawn on one end with a nose protruding, or formerly a small branch was cut from a tree and one part was left in the shape of a hook, calling it *Kagi Dono* or *Kagi Sama* in some places, and it was turned to find directions, while at present this custom has spread from Tôhoku all over the country as a sort of game, a problem to which we should give our attention. Since Tôhoku was near Ezo territory for a long time, its customs are apt to be looked upon as something alien, but we do not have many facts yet to support this view. And among the present population there are many who moved there in recent times, among them some powerful ones. Except that they have not yet accepted recent changes, they have few customs in their way of life that can really be called unique. Throughout our land each family worships its own *Kami*, and to venerate them in a wooden repository is a custom from long ago. The noteworthy point is that these wooden objects are called *Hotoke* in Tôhoku as well as in the southern islands of Kyûshû.

48 *Festival utensils and ceremonies*

In our country we set up symbols of wood to worship the dead. There is an explanation that Buddhist believers began to call these objects *Futo-no-ki* [Buddha wood], which those who like may believe. The reason that I do not is that in Tôhoku the word *hotoke* applies not only to the wooden slab by the grave and the memorial tablet, but to articles having nothing to do with death, such as the figure of mulberry wood called *Oshira*, which is given scant attention by Buddhists.

The word *butsu* 佛 came from the foreign word Buddha, but the Japanese word *hotoke* was not the true name for Buddha and was used at first only as another name for it. In earlier official records words such as *Banshin* [foreign deity] or *Kyaku-gami* [guest Kami] were used for Buddha, so we can see that it was included among various *Kami*. Rather than being another name, the word *hotoke* it may have been used at first to avoid a taboo word. Gradually *hotoke* was used in contrast to *kami* when it was advantageous to the propagation of Buddhism to compare superior and inferior attributes of the two, and so we can think that in this way the use of it gradually spread. If that is the case, it would not seem the least bit strange that the two altogether different concepts were included in *hotoke*, that of the Great Illumined One and that of the wandering soul of a man in the dark other world. If in the past the ordinary soul of the dead had not been permitted to be called *hotoke* as Buddha was called, the name could by no means be applied to both of them at present. In fact, an ordinary dead person was called *Hotoke* without any feeling of inappropriateness. Simply because *hotoki*, a pottery vessel, was used for offerings of food or drink for the rite performed outside the house, the one who received the offering, Buddha or an ordinary soul, was called by that name *hotoki*, there being no difference between them. Notwithstanding this, anyone who tries to explain that *hotoke* was used for all spirits because they had attained Buddhahood is only deceiving himself. If it were true, why do they have to hold a great ceremony for restless spirits every year to help them go to Paradise?

Better than such a complicated theory, we can find evidence in the fact that the word *hotoki* has come to be used in no other meaning than *hotoke*. If a word is once applied to indicate such a significant, impressive object, its meaning is limited to that particular object and not applied to ordinary things. It is the same as the word *saraki* meaning Buddha. This was a word once used popularly, but today it appears only in the penname of a famous writer,²⁶ a name rather perplexing to readers, and beyond that the word is no longer employed. Only one instance of the characters 大佛 read Osaragi is found among place names, but the word *saraki*, in spite of having a distinct sound clearly

distinguishable from other words, even from adjacent words in the dictionary, had changed from meaning pottery to a Buddhist image before the time when the great Buddhist image, Daibutsu 大佛 was created at Kamakura. *Hotoki* 缶 and *sarake* 醒 were food containers, so perhaps the *ke* ending was the original form and when these words mean Buddha, they have *ke* and *ki* reversed as *hotoke* and *saraki*. This may not have been done deliberately, for both forms were used commonly. In Nara prefecture there is a place name written *hebi-ana* 蛇穴 and read *Saraki*. I once explained this as being because that was a center for making pottery. The snake coiling is in many places referred to as *sara-ni-naru* [becoming a dish], for it resembles the old way the potter coiled his clay. Dishes and trays are all flat at present, but the *sarake* was a utensil used to contain liquid at a ceremony. There are many records of how washed rice and other grains were heaped onto one and sent out or offered. If the word *hotoki* were the only example, it might be considered to have been a mere coincidence, but there were also *saraki* meaning Buddha and *hokai* applied to a religious ceremony. And in the Recent Past *hokai* was both the name of the wooden receptacle used in the ceremony and the term for the ceremony of offering food in it to various souls of the dead. In short, my view is that *bon* is not a part of the word Ullambana but is derived from the name of the necessary utensil used in ceremonies of that festival, which may be open to question, but I offer it as something more than a random explanation.

49 *Spirits excluded from veneration*

At last we can take up the topic of the *Tama-matsuri* at Bon once more. What I have wanted to make clear was not the little problem concerned with the origin of names. The words *bon* and *hokai* are not just new words appearing in medieval times, but they are something like what we might call affiliated observances attached to the ancestral festival we are trying to consider, and we expect to show that even though it existed from the first, this observance made remarkable develop-

ment through the later influence of Buddhism. And this understanding is particularly important to our people from now on. Most dictionaries make no difference in the meanings of *matsuri* and *hokai*, but they are by no means the same word. *Hokai* was also the name of a ceremonial utensil and *bon* was food that was carried out of the house to offer, while *matsuri* was what took place within each family between distant ancestors and their descendants, a happy meeting and intercourse. Otherwise, a *matsuri* took place upon a fixed date and at a fixed place, a ceremony to meet a *Kami* from long ago in a given manner with the one taking charge and those assisting him all fixed before hand. Therefore, in times when there was no more fear that countless invisible, wandering spirits would gather around to disturb the peaceful celebration in such particularly good circumstances, ceremonies could be performed with due courtesy. However, when we review our past history, we find that after the slightest uprisings people scattered, and if a shortage of food continued even for a little while, many fell dead on the highways. There was no time to count the families that disappeared, leaving no trace. People who knew quite well that ancestors were to be worshipped by their descendants dreaded the increasing number of those who were without worshippers. One reason the state and local rulers bent their efforts on behalf of the long continuance of families was to save people from anxiety over this, but they had difficulties in carrying out their purpose, and they came, instead to rely upon Buddhists to send those spirits off a billion miles away. But since they did not have absolute confidence in that way of doing, the ritual of our *Senzo-matsuri* became so involved as to build separate altars or make a small additional place on one side of the ancestral altar to put offerings for those homeless spirits. Originally the grave was the site for ancestral observances, but it was hard to fix lines of demarcation outside the house, so in spite of the fact they had a place there to use, families had to lead their ancestral spirits from the grave into the inner room of the house or otherwise give plenty of offerings at the grave to spirits that thronged around. This offering is what is known as *hokai* in remote parts of Tôhoku and Shikoku, and this offering is where I am saying the word *bon* comes from.

To be sure, *Bon* at first was observed mainly to calm the fear of death, but the result has, on the contrary, increased our dislike for contact with death. Accordingly, the *Tama-matsuri* became a sad observance, so it could not be combined with the celebration of New Year, and some people even began to question how it could be counted as one of the five *sekku*. Half of the reasons for this was that too much effort was put into services for the newly dead relative, but indirectly it was also due to the fear of ungoverned spirits. There is a line in the *jôruri* called *Gappô ga tsuji* which says that the nearer the blood relation the spirit of the dead is, the more frightening it is. There may have been such a folk belief among other peoples, but in old Japan, at any rate, there was no such traditional idea, for the mourning hut was erected near the grave, in principle, and evidence is found of a custom of sleeping in the room with the corpse. There was the belief that harm would only come from those other spirits which did not receive sufficient offerings, a view held more strongly in the past than at present, and they said that those spirits caused poor crops, wind storms, and insect pests. Among the *Kami* of contagious diseases, only smallpox was believed to be the work of a single *Kami* who came alone in the form of an old man, an old woman, a young man, or a young woman, but generally the plague seems to have been caused by a group of spirits. Typhus is called *bo* or *bô* in dialect, which came from *Bo-no-kami* or *Bô-no-kami*, the name applied to the spirit that had power over this disease, and in Tôhoku there was an observance of escorting *Bô-no-kami* away each year until recent times. *Bô* was written 暴 [violence] or 棒 [stick], but I am inclined to think it actually meant *Bon*, for there still remain little shrines called *Bon-gami* in some villages. When people felt that the *hokai* offerings were not sufficient to soothe these spirits, they held a festival to worship them and send them off. This was the real purpose of the dance at *Bon*.

50 Characteristics of the new style *Bon*

That Japanese are a people who attach great importance to the

ancestral festival has already been known in foreign countries through the writings of Professor Hozumi Nobushige and others. However, we had no detailed accounts concerning facts about common people, and it has been easily concluded that old customs have still been kept without change or that only in a part of the country a few traces could be found. That much knowledge is better than nothing for a foreigner to have, but our people should know much more. The reason for this is that we are living in a society and atmosphere in which those customs are still indispensable and we must, moreover, be aware that they have slowly changed in the long course of time. Historically those observances were involved in intimate experiences in ordinary life, and they present problems on our road ahead, some barriers through which we must pass along our future way. Plainly speaking, the knowledge of these things is necessary for our people right now. Whether my explanation suffices is another matter, but that is no reason to abandon the problem without making sure of it.

The difference between the past and the present can not be noted in a single glance, but the *Tama-matsuri* at *Bon* has changes in it which can easily be understood, some which we have experienced, and there are sentiments recollected which are not apparent in their forms. So if we take up the matter from *Bon* once more, we may be able to approach closer to the obscure origin of the New Year observance and its former feeling and we can hope to have some appreciation of it. Reviewing the observance of *Bon*, we can see two special features. The first is that of making an offering to outside spirits, and even if this were not the practice introduced by a foreign religion, it certainly was a later development that this service became a feature of the *Bon* festival, the preliminary or accompanying rite necessary to it and to no other celebration. For this reason the observance at dawn on the 16th Day to send the souls off on their way became showy and gay, but something estranged from the affections of the family, and it became increasingly difficult to recognize it as a day for religious abstinence.

The second feature was a change to the intention of having separate observances for the new memorial, to keep the observance for purified souls of distant ancestors from contamination with mourning for the

newly dead, which can be seen now in the way a separate altar is built at *Bon* for the spirit of the newly departed, in some examples attaching it to the edge of the eaves or in others using green bamboo sticks for pillars wrapped in fresh leaves and such to make it appear different from the usual altar, and recently this practice has tended to be a memorial service for the dead in which relatives and old acquaintances partook to make it a big meeting. One of our weaknesses has been the dread of the taint of death, and we can not doubt that a sect of Buddhism took advantage of this point in spreading its faith, while on the other hand we felt we should make a distinction between our treatment of homeless, wandering spirits and the special courtesy to the spirits belonging to our family, especially those of our own blood for whom we still longed, which contributed further to this custom. After the toil of transplanting the rice and weeding, *Bon* was a happy time to rest and to anticipate the flowering of the grain, and that this became a quiet, sentimental time was not altogether due to the fixed seasonal circumstances. It was because people combined in their thinking the souls of the recent dead, who continued their bonds with this world and whose tears were still wet, with the precious visitors on that day, whose seats of honor were gradually taken by the former, and considering the relation of *imi*²⁷ and *matsuri*, we can say this is probably another recent change.

51 *The thirty-third year after death*

I think that formerly separate offerings may have been made for the soul of the newly dead with a different time, place, and person to perform it, just like the offering for *Mitama* at the first New Year after a death, but I have no definite proof of it yet. I see in the present manner of serving *mitama-no-meshi* an attempt to force its separation from the New Year celebration, which shows that formerly there may have been two different ceremonies which later were combined into one. What can be taken up here is the length of the years of mourning from death to the time when the soul was thought to be purified so

as to be included among the ancestral spirits of the family, for whom auspicious celebrations should be held, and there was a clear limit to terminate this period, which is becoming increasingly difficult to know. This is what I consider the third change in the *Tama-matsuri* at *Bon*.

In genteel families of conservative regions they do not consider the special service at *Bon* for a newly departed soul as concluded with one year. Even for the second year a separate altar is set up for it with details slightly more simple than those of the previous year but still different from the observance of ordinary years. Furthermore, the second year does not mark the limit of time, for the third anniversary service is not yet finished. Even after the special altar is no longer made for the newly dead, he is remembered with sorrow at *Bon* for years, as long as there are intimate relatives living in the family. With repeated recognition of this sort at *Bon* the family's feelings could not help favoring those close to them who had died recently. This gradually changed the old *Senzo-matsuri*, another point I have been thinking about.

The term "becoming an ancestor" is used around Yoshino in Yamato and in villages in the mountains of southern Kawachi with an entirely different meaning from the one I introduced earlier. Ordinarily in the thirty-third year after a man's death, sometimes in the forty-ninth or fiftieth, a final ceremony called *toburai-age* or *toi-kiri* [concluding memorial service for the spirit of the dead] is held. They say that on this day the man will become an ancestor. This is not simply because old ancestors of all generations are worshipped together with a single ceremony, but while the anniversary services are held individually for one who has died, people in those regions can not include him in their general conception of an ancestor. On an island north of Kyûshû they say that after the thirty-third memorial service is held for a man, he becomes a *Kami*. In Tosa the interval for the head of a family serving a certain *Kami* is shortened to six or three years, after which he can become a *Kami*. It means that he has already been purified from the pollution of death and he may be worshipped as a *Kami*, such a faith having been held for a long time in families of men and women engaged in serving *Kami*. This certainly has some connection with the

idea that the soul becomes an ancestor at the final memorial service.

There was a custom in Tôhoku of throwing the *ihai* into the river after the close of the final memorial service. Examples which are one step more definite are those found on various southern islands with certain small differences which it would be profitable to compare, and the first one to take up is from the main island of Okinawa where the thirty-third year marks the limit, after which they believe the soul becomes an O-Kami. What they call *Goreizen* is an ancestral altar which we call *butsudan*, but in old homes there is an additional altar for O-Kami above for it, and at this ceremony the characters on the *ihai* on the *Goreizen* are scraped off and it is put up in the altar for the O-Kami. The food offering on the *Goreizen* is the same as what people eat, but twice a year at festivals for rice and wheat the O-Kami are offered ritually pure dishes which have no fish or meat. On Kikaijima ancestors are called *uyafuji*, and they are worshipped in the same way at *Bon*, a separate dish set before a new spirit, but after the thirty-third year has passed, a single offering is made to all ancestors.

In other words, after a certain number of years they recognize that the soul of the ancestor casts off its individuality and merges into the single form. We do not have proof that the same idea was held in central Japan proper, but there, too, the thirty-third year was a major terminal point. Another matter of similarity throughout a wide area is the big *tôba* [wooden tablet by the grave] of different shapes set up on the day of the final memorial, a square cornered post in Shikoku or Chûgoku, and in the eastern regions a stick called *hatsuki-tôba* [*tôba* with fresh leaves], *uretsuki-tôba* [*tôba* with top leaves], or *iki-tôba* [living *tôba*], which is cut from a tree with top leaves left like the *Hotoke-bô* of Aizu. The kind of tree used is fixed in various regions—pine, cypress, *sakaki*, or willow—and when these sometimes take root, in Kôshû and other places it is said to be the sign the soul has been reborn. Along the coast of Nambu usually a forked stick with no branches or leaves left on top is set up, and it is said that after the thirty-third year the soul is reborn. They explain that such a tall stick is set up so the new child will grow fast and prosper. In Kami-ina-gun of Shinshû there are some people who say that the soul becomes a bird and takes

off for the sky from this stick, but that is probably a new way of thinking. There is not necessarily a contradiction between the ideas that a soul is reborn and that it becomes a *Kami*. People of long ago may have thought that souls which did not become men again after a certain number of years were considered ancestral deities who protect the family and their country. In villages in the mountains of Kitashidara-gun in Mikawa they say that after thirty-three years a *Hotoke* cleanses himself and becomes a *Kami*, and then there is a custom of selecting a stone for the dead from the river and placing it with others in a row at the shrine of the *Uji-gami*. At any rate, in the original faith of our people no spirit was believed to be wandering for a long period, relying only upon the memorial services for eternal repose.

52 *The altar to Mitama in each house*

The fourth change in the festival at *Bon* has been the difference in the use of the word *senzo* among people, and it can be said that it is due to the increase of people who have knowledge of characters—in other words, those who are inclined to employ the literal meaning based upon written characters—but it is also the result of putting more effort into prayers for the happiness of souls close to them that departed recently into the spirit world. Those who passed away only a year or two ago, whose voices and faces have not faded from memory, can hardly be worshipped as *Senzo* by most people. Formerly the term *Senzo-dana* was used everywhere, and it can still be found in a number of places, but it no longer seems appropriate. And the word *butsudan* seems to have been first employed without a special meaning, although there were some families that placed small Buddhist statues on their altars, and some others belonging to a certain sect that puts emphasis upon distributing a religious scroll placed the ancestral tablets in a row below the scrolls which were hung in the center of their altars, and most people would simply explain without any thought that they called the altar *butsudan* because they worshipped the *Hotoke* of their family at it.

The result of this misunderstanding appears in unexpected places now. A family that had departed from Buddhist practices removed its *butsudan* first of all. But venerating souls who had not yet received the final ceremony at the thirty-third year on the same level as *Kami* was not an old way. The traditional feeling remained in hearts, and they thought there was no place to worship even the souls of their parents at home. In the precinct of the *Uji-gami* in a rural town not far from Tokyo there are a number of little stone shrines to ancestors. Shintô scholarship was developed rather early in this area, and a number of families abandoned their Buddhist faith. In recent years they erected these little shrines one after another. This impressed us for a number of reasons, for similar examples could be found in many other regions without any connection with Shintô teachings, one of them being a stone for the dead in villages of Sanshû, which I have already mentioned, but those examples were all for souls already purified from the taint of death. In this case, however, even souls of ones who had died only six or ten months before, for whom there remained fresh grief, could be removed to the sacred precinct. When I asked why such a sacrilegious thing had been done, one man replied honestly that part of the families no longer had a *butsudan*, so there was nowhere souls could be worshipped. In other words, because the altar was called *butsudan*, they had made the mistake of abolishing it. To put it more severely, from former times, before the teachings of Buddhism arrived, the family divided souls of their ancestors into two groups, the new and the old, and it was wrong to have forgotten that there was such a faith. Then unless the *Uji-gami* had been expected to welcome the souls stained with death, whom the living disliked to touch, there would have been no place for the newly dead to go. Needless to say, I think it is natural that people who carried on the old traditional feeling were not inclined to follow this way of doing.

If the term *Senzo-dana* could not be substituted for *butsudan* because of young ones among the dead, they could have gone back one step further into the past and revived the word *Mitama-dana* [altar to souls]. However, as time passed changes in the meaning of that word appeared, and its use at present in various regions would have to be revised. There

are many places where the *butsudan* is also called *Mitama Sama*, not because *butsudan* is a word tabooed at New Year, but apart from this, at several places in Satsuma they call their *Kami* altar by that name. Or it may be different from the usual *Kami-dana*, but it is not the usual *butsudan* which the family head could take with him when he retired, for the *Mitama Sama* always remained at the main family. In Tôhoku there is a clear example of this in an old family near Morioka. Besides the *Kami* altar and the *butsudan* in this family there is an altar called *Mitama Sama* set up at which ancestors are worshipped. This is by no means an unusual custom, but it happens that we have not been aware of it until now. The first that we saw recently was in the village called Kitatachibana at the foot of Mt. Akagi in Jôshû in an old house in which there was a third altar, one for *Mitama*. It was a different altar set up opposite the *Kami* altar, and at what seemed the same height, but I have not made sure of the height yet. After the soot has been swept on the 13th Day of the last month of the year, they begin setting a light upon this *Mitama Sama*. The offering may be *mochi*, and I think they carry out the observance of *Mitama-matsuri* at New Year at this altar.

53 *About deified spirits*

Kami and *Mitama* are at present regarded as two different things. When we find the term *Jingi-no-mitama* in old records, it is hard to believe that it was thus from the beginning of our country, but it is difficult to ascertain when these two words, *Kami* and *Mitama*, began to be distinguished in the minds of people. However, the difference between the two was that of rank, and the lower could rise to the upper according to circumstances and in proper order according to the system established by the people, the appropriate time of which can be known through written records. And that does not seem to be a particularly ancient world. Any people were permitted to respect and worship the soul of the dead, to set up a symbol of wood and to offer purified drink and food, but in spite of the regular ritual held for it,

it became far more difficult than today to worship it as a deity for the simple reason that it was the soul of a man. It is not just by chance that this change occurred about the time Shintô developed, when the custom began among people to visit and worship and make their petitions at great shrines having no connection with their family or their place of birth. Eventually countless lesser deities of various kinds, which scholars can not explain, were left as they were, indoors or outdoors, and from that time the big *Kami* became more and more respected, making a marked distance between them and souls of men.

According to the custom since Middle Antiquity, when a man was worshipped and a shrine was dedicated to him, he was given the title *Reijin*. Formerly the word *rei* was not used in a special sense, but when it was combined with *shin* as a title, it signified a spirit one degree lower than a *Kami* and higher than an ordinary spirit or *Mitama*, and consequently there was established the system of ranks of *Kami* and spirits, which had never been imagined by people prior to that age. There are many actual examples of this, but the creation of the famous *Warei Sama* in Iyo is a good one to represent the idea of that period. Yambe Seibei was a just man who met with violent death, which he resented deeply. One hundred years after his death, his spirit began to wreak vengeance, and common people in that region regarded him with increasing awe, but while they worshipped him under the title *Reijin*, his ancient indignation continued unabated, and he bestowed no favor. Thereupon he was given the title *Daimyôjin*, and that was the foundation for building the great faith in him as it is found now.

That is not to say that such a way of thinking spread widely among people, who usually worshipped and prayed to deities without realizing the distinction. Another example similar to *Warei Daimyôjin* is that of *Sakura-no-Sôgo* in Kantô, who made his manifestation in much the same way, and although the sacred building dedicated to him is called *reidô* [sacred hall], which is not classified as a shrine, nevertheless in both examples people believed more and more strongly that their petitions would surely be granted because a spirit so severe in curses would surely be powerful in giving benefits. When we think of it, we recall that elsewhere there are many examples of what were clearly men being

worshipped as *Kami*, those given the name *Goryô*, *Ima-miya*, or *Waka-miya*, and such. One part of them are given official recognition at shrines, and the rest are included in private worship in various families, something with attributes which make it difficult to decide whether they are *Kami* or deified spirits. If facts about these folk beliefs were known some day in society, I think it would clarify the organization of our shrine system, but at present we can not escape the fact that within the whole range of spirits there are some among them whose ranks are not clearly established. Some have names which seem naturally to belong to them, some with names attached from the outside and used without reason, and others who have kept their original name but with its meaning changed, and these three kinds have been interchanged, making it more difficult to recognize them. Nothing starts out in a complicated form. The difference between the *Kami* and *Mitama* altars suggests to us that there was once a far purer expression of faith than at present.

54 *Deciding proper sites for a celebration*

There is a big problem which remains. It is hardly possible to explain it just in passing, but I must say a word about celebrations held in the family. Various altars called *Kami-dana* or *Tama-dana* arose from the need for a suitable, purified place to hold a celebration inside the house with an intention similar to carrying sand and heaping it high for a ritual site outside the house. Even now in villages in eastern Kantô which carry out the spring festival strictly according to rules there is the festival called *Bisha* or *O-bisha*, and on its eve people gather for a night watch in a place determined by rote, and they lay a wide board out on the floor and set all the offerings and decorations for the occasion upon it. An example that can frequently be seen in the suburbs of Tokyo is when the grounds of the shrine are used for a temporary site for prayers and petitions, and a small wooden platform is built, branches are hung at its four corners, and offerings are laid upon it. The round straw mat that looks like the lid to a straw rice bag, called

sanbayashi, which is also used at a festival, may be a simplified form of this. In case the observance would be outside, the plot of sacred ground would be marked off and it would not be used for ordinary purposes. We can also believe that sometimes a site was chosen in the corner of the grounds of an estate, a stone laid there and branches of a china nettle tree stuck into the ground to mark the place for the ceremony. But in case the observance took place indoors, they would bring in a board that was not ordinarily used and put it on the floor where the ceremony was carried out. As skill developed in building, they could make a permanent altar in the house.

When we think of the crudely built homes of common people in old times, we are convinced that there were times when they usually had to select an outdoor site for the ancestral festival, or other times when there was no great problem about whether it should be held inside or out. For night watches in winter or for various performances, rites, and feasts accompanying the ceremony which required a long time, they used a part of the dwelling instead of putting up a temporary shed for protection from rain and dew, but while strict abstinence was kept, there were many restrictions and inconveniences, and even now in many villages adult women are not permitted to enter the inner room in which the *Kami* altar is set up or to pass before the altar which is behind the seat of the head of the family. The meaning of etiquette about the *tokonoma*, too, in Japanese houses is understood when we regard it as the seat of *Kami*.

We might say that choosing an outdoor site for a religious ceremony is the older way. But it is difficult to know the position or especially the rank of *Kami* according to the place where it is worshipped, either indoors or outdoors. It has frequently been explained that the *Uji-gami* was the deified spirit of the founder of an *uji* [clan] and besides conspicuous examples that are found, at present people in some regions still believe that their *Uji-gami* are the spirits of their ancestors, but now there are many conditions coming to light that do not fit into this general conception, making this problem in the original faith in Japan very difficult to solve. As long as we do not think Shintô is just a relic of the past, we must muster as much energy as possible

and approach this question to examine it. The first uncertain point is that if each family has an ancestral altar and observes an ancestral festival, then the celebration of *Uji-gami* may be a duplication, which I have explained partially. As the family prospered, it was divided from time to time, and the power of the main family to keep it united began to lessen, decline, and disappear, while branch families, after they once were set up, had their own ancestors and celebrated festivals in each house without concern for the festivals in the main family. However, this custom may have been possibly revised according to the will of the one who intended to become an ancestor of the new family. In other words, when the direct line of descent in the main family could no longer continue, its descendants should have given up their negative attitude of only preserving the exclusive right of the main family and have tried to set up an acceptable way in its place, which has really been practiced in many cases. Because of families dying out or of the indifference of the family head, the number of ancestors who were not being worshipped increased, but now that the *Uji-gami* are supported by the country, they hardly disappear with the families.

55 *The Uji-gami of the village*

This becomes the germ for the next uncertain point. Even if it is called *Uji-gami*, villagers with different *uji* and different family names meet to celebrate a single *Uji-gami* festival. Now there are many people who think that in spite of the name *Uji-gami*, something other than the *Kami* of the family is meant by that name. Such examples are possibly found because the name itself spread everywhere, but we still can ascertain the history of many *Uji-gami* shrines in villages; in fact, in a considerably wide area in the south and north of the country what they call *Uji-gami* is the *Kami* worshipped within a *maki* like the *Iwai-jin* in *Kôshû* and *Shinshû*. It is possible to investigate how these *Kami* of a number of clans became united. It might be better to say that the festival, itself, became united, for while the festival was held on the

same day and at the same place, many people began gradually to think the deity was the same. There was also another reason for this which I am going to mention next, but it was promoted principally because of the intention to make the festival a successful, happy occasion. Usually there were more than two lines of families living and mingling in a village, and they associated and formed relationships by marriage, and there was also the difference in family ranks, one family being respected more than others. Usually the festival site of the most influential family was used by others, and perhaps the festival days and times of different families were set close to one another. Sometimes for the sake of mutual convenience they constructed a new shrine together at a separate place, while in cases found more often the group provided with new equipment developed more modern rites for its *Kami*, and others continued to hold old-style, simple observances for their smaller *Uji-gami* in a temporary building or in an open place with a religious symbol erected there. At any rate, this marked one phase in which the number of *Uji-gami* no longer increased as before, and there is no denying that the festival for *Uji-gami* gradually came to be regarded as a different affair from the ancestral festival within each family.

Another reason why people at present think of *Uji-gami* as different from the family *Kami* is that a considerable number of *Uji-gami* shrines took names of great *Kami* such as those at Hachiman, Kitano, Kamo, Kasuga, and many others, which were names of big shrines. There is a strange fact here which is very difficult to explain, but this development was already present when the *Uji-gami* was being worshipped only within the family year after year, and it did not always start as a result of building up a united shrine of the village. I would explain this by saying that our *Uji-gami* was formerly one degree closer to man, who when alive respected and worshipped the great *Kami* of the land and upon occasion made prayers and petitions to them, always believing in them, and we might say that recognizing the limitations of his own power, he always thought that unless he had faith in a great national deity as a foundation, he could not attain his aim of protecting his descendants. We may not be able to say that this feeling is indigenous

to our nation, but at least we can admit it was prompted by the unification policy in ancient times.²⁸ When the combinations of shrines were carried out indiscriminately in recent years,²⁹ it was necessary to mention the names of the deities of the shrines combined, but in the case of the *Uji-gami* shrine, the ancestral spirits enshrined together was understood, so it was sufficient to call it just *Hachiman Sama* of such and such a family or *Tenjin Sama* or *Inari Sama* at such and such a place. If it had not been so, they could not have called their *Uji-gami* by the same names as those of great national deities which thousands of people worshipped together. Many of the head families who took charge of the *Uji-gami* shrines died out or cooperative groups in charge of the rituals were discontinued, and thereafter Shintô priests in other shrines were required to perform rituals at festivals, so under such circumstances people did not have a chance to think of the difference in origin between *Chinju* and *Uji-gami*, and in the central part of the country the name *Uji-gami* is actually used with a different meaning from the original one. But it is not my responsibility to revise that in this book. I only want to say that the greater number of more than one hundred thousand shrines in our land originated from a pure ceremony for ancestral souls on a selected ground strictly excluded from pollution, and that this outdoor ritual site and various ancestral altars inside the house can be traced in the same line of development according to age, and when the outdoor rites seemed more distant from home life, the altars inside the house became necessary. Of course this is only a tentative conclusion and it would be better if a clearer explanation were forth-coming, but I can not agree with the view that the complicated ceremonies and many practices of faith today are in their old form.

56 *The grave as the festival site*

The order of my explanation has changed a little from what I had planned, but the grave was another outdoor ritual site, and the difference between that and the shrine of the *Uji-gami* is in no way the same as

the difference between Buddhism and Shintô, for my view is that the ceremony at the grave was intended to separate the rite for the newly departed soul from that for the ancestral deity. Where do we go after death? And where does the soul pass its time? Apart from these difficult questions which we face, there remains the one about how former people thought about them. At present this is a matter we can not delay considering until easier times, for even if we are not aware of it, this governs our behavior. Of course, there have been changes in ways of thinking, and it is not easy to decide which is the older way or the more prevalent, but excluding those who give it no thought, most people think that the place where the dead are is in the ground below the grave, which is a new idea supported by the custom of going to greet the soul at *Bon* at the grave to invite it to follow us. But we can find in writings of earlier times that the next world was thought to be underground. And there may have been people who imagined that the body would reside as in its former life at the place it was buried, but the fact is that the place Japanese called *musho* [the grave] was usually different from the burial site.

Our research group calls this custom the double-grave system, although it may not be a very suitable term. In this system the burial site was called *ike-baka* [burying ground], *ue-no-haka* [upper burial ground], and even *sute-baka* [abandoning ground] in some places, and it was far back in the hills, at the far end of an open field, or by the edge of the sea where people seldom passed, and presently it could no longer be recognized, people in some places thinking that was proper. At other places there was the *mairi-baka* or *matsuri-baka* [ceremonial graveyard], one called *uchi-baka* [the graveyard nearby], or *tera-baka* [temple graveyard], usually entrusted to a temple which had convenient facilities for worship. It is certain that there was a period when some of the upper class people tried to preserve the corpse for a long time, but there was no similar practice among common people, and there was no general custom of employing a stone memorial, so the burial place for ordinary men before Middle Antiquity was hard to trace. About the time the double-grave system spread there were two kinds of single graves. In one way they did not set up a memorial where the man was buried, but

they might plant a tree or leave a rock to mark the spot, and by the time those who remembered the place had all passed away, the place was forgotten in the course of natural events. The reason the ancient *go-zanmai* [cemeteries] around Kyoto with limited capacity have been used for over a thousand years without inconvenience was that people did not deny the extinction of the flesh and thought that through that means spirits were free to come and go and even desired it.

Changes in burial customs were mostly in new cities and newly developed manufacturing areas due to the increase in population. In those new regions there were no boundaries to mark off community burial grounds and each tomb was the positive way of determining a site. As the result of this second system of single-grave, more land was used for burial, and in a short time confusion arose which was difficult to put into order, and in the meantime our ancestral festival became obscure. Even now in one area of Kantô there are villages in which people build a single altar in front of the grave and at *Bon* they bring their *hokai* there, while in Tokyo and elsewhere the grave is considered empty during *Bon*, and nobody pays any attention to it. We can see that along with transferring the festival site into the house, there was sympathetic consideration of the consolation it would bring, and while they continued to think of the grave as the habitation of the soul, there was the observance on the 13th Day *Bon* to go there to meet it, but nobody questioned why on the 16th Day they did not go to send it back to the grave. In other words, the tombstone was originally built for the soul to rest on, and here was where they came to greet it and worship it, and later when the site for the festival was set up around the house, they did not realize it was no longer necessary to go to the grave. If we consider the influence of Buddhist and Confucian ways of thinking as related factors of the problem, worship at the grave is a most conspicuous instance of it. The stone monument did not always mark the burial site, but as the double-grave system changed to the single grave practice, the former way of burial began to appear crude, and the feeling of a filial child and a chaste wife for the grave of their beloved came to resemble that of China. Casting off the dread of death as soon as possible, people long ago wanted to

stand before the soul of the departed with a pure, quiet heart, but this feeling is becoming difficult for modern people to understand. An impassable boundary was drawn between *Kami* and ancestors, and many ranks were created among them. And it can not be helped that few are able to explain why the *Uji-gami* bestows special favors upon its flock.

57 *Isolating the ancestral spirit*

For a long time the points which the two faiths, native and foreign, have had the greatest difficulty in harmonizing have been that while the native one tried to hasten the purification of the soul of the newly dead from pollution which it bore so that communication between this world and the other world could be established soon, Buddhist priests, exceeding the restrictions of the death taboo, took up services for the newly departed soul to remove our uneasiness, but in effect it prolonged the same condition, even for one hundred years or more when possible. The result which the priest anticipated the most was sending souls off to Buddha's Paradise, the separation of the dead from the living, which we do not always desire earnestly. Even when Buddhist teachings prevailed to the highest degree, men with the national trait of continuing to be concerned about this world did not disappear. And it was recognized that such thoughts could not be disposed of by saying they were mere delusion. The final ceremony at the end of the thirty-third year may have been a compromise between the two ideas, for I think that formerly the interval was a little shorter, but this was accepted as a suitable division of time, after which the soul could detach itself from the sense of self and blend into the powerful spiritual image of the ancestor to become freely active on behalf of the family and work officially for the land. It is my conjecture that this formed the basis for faith in *Uji-gami*.

Buddhism recognized this inherent sentiment of our people and aimed from the start to penetrate it and blend with it, but still it could not refrain from slowly developing its own way. It respected the festival of the *Uji-gami* in the village, but frequently expressed its views about

the ancestral festival in the home and the management of the grave. It was particularly easy to take that opportunity for teaching because people naturally had a warm feeling for the dead who had recently passed away. We used to have only vague ideas about the past. Gradually the images of the past drew near until they were no farther away than our parents and grandparents, which resulted in shortening the history of the family, and it was a loss to our future as well as to our past. The reason for it is that the belief in far distant ancestors descending at annual festivals had been the basis for anticipating that our own spirits after death might continuously visit this land forever. A still greater mistake was to mention a particular name among ancestors, that of an important, remarkable man whose merits had been talked about among descendants to their satisfaction and encouragement, and if he was especially worshipped so splendidly, many other obscure souls were reduced to neglected spirits or "persimmon leaves." While they were alive they worked together, wept and rejoiced as a part of the same group, but after death they became separated and isolated individual souls in the course of time. It does not follow that the spirits given such attention were only those looked up to and worshipped by thousands, for many among the individual spirits were maintained only for some special reason in each of their families. I have already explained that stone monuments were tombs independent of the place of burial, but it is only recently that ordinary people were able to erect them, and that has not been due to any laws or ordinances being issued, but it was after the beginning of the Meiji era that they were set up in numbers anywhere one might wish. According to what others as well as I recall, formerly a single tombstone marked the family grave of all ancestors. The Sino-Japanese war was a serious incident in its day, and monuments for young soldiers who had died on the battlefield were constantly being erected in various villages, which started the idea of setting up tombstones for individuals. After that, people who had the money seemed to compete with each other in erecting them. This may be a good way of doing as long as there is land available in our country and it may deserve support, but while it may not come within the bounds of the problem I have raised, I think we should give some thought to

the fact that as some names are being recognized for a long time, other countless, nameless souls of the same family are left only buried deep in the bottom of the grave. We can not say that this was the way things were done in the past. The ancestral observance in each family settled that problem in general. Creating souls who are not revered by anybody because the family became extinct could not be prevented by individual effort, and as long as the family continues to exist, no soul can be entirely forgotten even for a thousand years. At least, people in the past could believe it. When it comes to this point, Buddhism is more attached to the present world than our *Kami* way. That the country has continued for three thousand years and more gives some meaning to the fact that descendants have not died out. But if we only depend upon our memory in worshipping our ancestors, we can not help feeling anxious about the unity of the single line of descent of our race. We can not say that Buddhism disregarded this, but when we look at how *Bon* rites at the grave are celebrated, we can criticize it for not attaching more importance in that direction.

58 *Unconscious tradition*

Through Buddhist influence the festival of *Bon* has clearly changed, but at present due to its popularity and complexity, several old elements remain preserved in it. The reason why we pay attention to what was preserved among old people, women, and children, aside from the explanations in books and reports from scholars, is that we search for traces of old customs and unconscious tradition. Such unwritten, fragmental materials have been rapidly vanishing through the spread of common school education. However, they were fortunately protected from outside disturbance because they looked so trivial and rustic. People born in villages think that theirs are odd customs belonging only to their region. When they are compared with examples from other places, we realize for the first time that they should not be looked upon as casual happenings in our cultural history.

It would be better for me to start with some very ordinary practices

and set aside for now the gay decorations for new souls at *Bon*. Take for example, in many happy families where parents and brothers spend their time in vigorous work and where in recent years there has been no sadness the ancestral celebration is a happy event for which they can hardly wait. Cheerful preparations while anticipating *Bon* are those of cleaning the house, polishing furniture, fixing neat clothes, preparing food, and in many families parents take special care of children's behavior, admonishing them not to catch dragonflies or butterflies, not to fight, and not to shout or cry because *Bon Sama* dislikes such doings. And during *Bon* usual work is not done, not because men are exempt from labor at the time but to enable them to observe a respectful discipline. Sewing or washing could not be done, not only because women were too busy, and during *Bon* nobody went out to cut fodder in families that kept cows or horses. Some said it would not do, for they might cut the feet of the spirits, who they felt were already drawing near to be met by them on the 13th Day. On the other hand, however, there was a custom of cutting grass or making a path for *Bon*. Usually on the 7th Day, or earlier, the whole village turned out to clear the path down from the mountain-top, and together with this was the custom of cutting grass around the grave, by which we can see there was the intention of making the path neat for the spirits to come down from a high place to the grave stone.

I have already contrasted the custom of gathering flowers on the 11th Day of the Seventh Month and the custom of going to greet the pine at New Year. Formerly the day the spirits arrived was a little earlier, and there may have been some sign other than the pine torch in the evening of the 15th Day to mark their arrival clearly. A well known custom at Chinkôji in Matsubara, Kyôto is of going to meet the spirits with a small branch of fir, and they let it rest one night in the well at the house, while on a different day cypress was used at Inariyama, a *shikimi* branch at Mt. Atago, and a little branch of pine at Iwakiyama in Tsugaru, all of which are alike in using something to greet spirits and to guide them down from the sacred hill. In other words, the purple bud of the Chinese bellflower or yellow centralia flowers were also imagined to be the resting place of spirits. A more

unusual custom was in the country in the southern part of Kyûshû where they went to meet spirits at the *Bon* market. They borrowed the use of a corner of a friendly store in town where they joined in a jolly drinking bout after they were through trading. From there they led the spirits to the room for souls in each of their houses, which was the way people in that district went to greet souls. This was reserved for the souls of the newly dead, but around Hachinohe in Nambu of Tôhoku, people still had a custom of going to the year's end market to greet the *Mitama*. These practices are based upon the same idea that spirits came to meet us on a fixed day, while manners of carrying out the occasion have varied according to period. Among these practices, that of going to the market to greet souls should be especially interesting hereafter to students.

59 “*This light*”

There are a number of activities included in greeting souls on the 13th Day of *Bon* which lie outside the limits of Buddhism. The first is the place where fire is lighted to meet the souls in the evening, usually in front of the stone monument of the *mairi-baka*, and from there many light their lanterns and set out to guide the spirits, but a number of examples are of a fire being lighted in front of each door, at cross-roads, or by a small stream, and from these places fire is taken to show the souls the direct way to the house close by. A spectacular custom is that of villagers all climbing to the top of a certain hill and lighting a fire there, which nowadays has been turned over to children to do, little pine torches being put into their hands and allowing them to wave them, toss them up into the air, and shout. This has become half like a sport, and for that reason another fire is built before the door or grave, but many other examples show that this was formerly a serious activity of adults. Before faceted lanterns or Gifu lanterns were used popularly, a metal lantern was placed onto the top of a pole or a torch was lighted at the end of a big pillar which everyone helped set up, all of which are later methods, and in the period still

earlier than that, a bonfire was the central event at *Bon* and New Year. It was natural that people seeing the lights flickering and shining in the distance would think these would mark the path for spirits, but formerly the precious guests were thought to have arrived already by that time. At any rate, when people around saw the fire burning brightly, they became excited and uttered simple words to invite the spirits, although recently they leave it to children to lift their voices in most cases.

Around Suwa this fire was built on the 6th Day, the children calling the fire *kiyarannô*. This surely was the local phrase for *kitamawanu ka yo* [won't you please come this way], but some people say the phrase should be *kiyare nonnô*. In villages and little settlements of Shimane and Tottori the spirits at *Bon* are called *Konakare San*, which is without a doubt from *kono akari* [this light]. Even now when they light the fire by the grave or a little stream, they repeat over and over:

Bon San, Bon San,
Kono akari de gozai yaashi
[*Bon San, Bon San,*
Come by this light]

The same words have been used for a long time along the Japan Sea far to the north in Akita and Tsugaru. I can offer two old examples, one of which belongs to the Kansei era, being in a writing entitled *Oomin zui* about folk customs around Hirosaki, which says

Shichi gatsu jûsannichi no tama matsuri suru o, hokai suru to iu.
Kababi to te sakura no ki no kawa o kado goto ni taku. Sono taku
toki no kotoba

Onjii na, Onbaa na,
Bekoko umako ni notte
Kitôrai, kitôrai.

[They call the festival of souls on the 13th Day of the Seventh Month *hokai*. They burn the bark of a cherry tree by the entrance of each house, calling it birch fire. The words recited at that time are:

Grandpa, Grandma,

Ride a cow or horse and
Please come, please come].

In the other example found in *Akita fûzoku toijô kotae*, published twenty years later than that record, the children's words go:

*Onjii na, Onbaa na,
Umako ni notte, bekoko ni notte
Akarui ni kitôrae, kitôrae.*

[Grandpa, Grandma,
Ride a horse, ride a cow, and
Please come, please come by this light].

Of course, on the 16th Day when they send them on their way, they change it to *itoorae* [go back]. The same words have been handed down to this day, more than a hundred years later. With slight changes in dialect, children in northern Shinshû have used the same words until recently:

*Jii San, Baa San,
Kono akari de ode yare ode yare.*

[Grandpa, Grandma,
Please come, please come by this light].

On the 16th Day it is only changed to *okee ryare, okee ryare* [go back, go back]. In the example in Kimitsu-gun of Kazusa the words are,

*Onjii, Onbaa, kore o akari ni
Ocha nomi ni oide nashite kudasare.*

[Grandpa, Grandma, please come by this light
To have tea with us].

Surely these phrases were not left to children alone, for everyone in the village joined in repeating them every year, and that this idea has reflected in the way of thinking among villagers needs hardly to be explained.

60 According to children's rhymes

Upon hearing those words many people will recall things in their own home towns, and what has moved me the most is the deep concern

among older people over selecting the name for the spirit visitors at *Bon*, which are called *Go-Senzo Sama*, *Shôryô Sama*, and the like, one that would express great affection and intimacy for children. The terms *Jii San*, *Baa San* did not always mean an old couple. Among the ancestors there were those who had regrettably left this world while still young, and those old ones who had been left alone in their old age passed lonely lives, and as a simple term applied to the general idea of ancestors including all those spirits, they employed the words *Jii San*, *Baa San*, which sounded easy to children. Or before the words *jii* and *baa* were invented, perhaps there had been similar ones which had changed into these forms. Little boys and girls did not necessarily recall individual images of their ancestors. If they had done so, there would have been a distinction made between those close and intimate and those distant and faint in their minds. But in most cases boys and girls had real grandparents with them, and I think some of them with delicate sentiment would hardly call ancestors by the same names.

Some people in parts of Kantô call only the ancestors who come at *Bon* *Nonno-jii* [Grandpa *Nonno*] and *Nonno Baa* [Grandma *Nonno*]. These are probably new words used to distinguish them from the living grandfather and grandmother, and because the reason for using them is becoming uncertain, they are not likely to spread hereafter. *Nonno* in those names means one who should be worshipped—the sun, the moon, and deities and Buddhas are all called *Nono Sama* in colloquial language—and the expression *nô-nô* was formerly used in calling someone more often than now, while some people used it when they tried to draw somebody's attention, or especially when they prayed to *Kami* or Buddha. Some people identify it with *namu* [Namah in sanskrit] in its childish form, and actually the Buddhist altar is called *Nammai San* or *Mamman San* in some families, but that is probably different from *nonno*, and this latter is more like *nee* or *naa* of today, used much more often by women and children in place of the formal term *mono-môsu* [I say]. There is the term *nonno* in dialect for priests and from Shinshû into Echigo it is used for *miko*, *bikuni* [itinerant shamaness], and lower grade men of religious occupations. This may be the remains of the custom of calling "*Nô-nô*" to ancestors who came back at *Bon*.

ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS

The people of former times naturally spoke to ancestral spirits as they did to living persons, calling them *Jii Sama*, *Baa Sama*. Recently only children say these words as well as the phrase, "This light," which I have mentioned, and adults just listen to them, but in the Chûbu area with which I am familiar, people in mature years recall that when they went as children in the evening on the 13th Day to the grave, after making the fire and lighting their lanterns from the blaze, they put their hands behind as though ready to carry somebody who was there on their backs and said, "*Jii Sama*, *Baa Sama*, let's start now." Some made it seem even more real by picking up a little rock in front of the grave and cupping it in their hands behind their backs. In a region removed from there an old man made a new straw rope every year at *Bon* and took it on his shoulders to the grave. If anyone asked him what the rope was for, he would reply that he would use it to carry *Hotoke Sama* home on his back. There used to be stories of carrying *Kami* on the back, but here it remains concerned with ancestors.

I hear of a samurai class family where until nearly the middle of the Meiji era the wife would dress in her formal attire bearing the family crest at *Tama-matsuri* in *Bon*, kneel at the front entrance, and express herself just as she would to a living guest, saying that her hospitality had fallen short of being adequate, thanking the guest for his sojourn, and saying that she would be looking forward to his visit the next year, using more elaborate and courteous wording. We can hardly say that she expected to hear a reply from the spirit, but this had been the etiquette in that family for generations, and she practiced it herself to show the way instead of just telling how to say or how to think, like present education. In my own home my father put on his formal divided skirt and went to the entrance of the home to greet the spirits and to see them off. People who say that this was only for show or empty formality forget that formerly this was an occasion to make children think about such matters. Perhaps with that in mind, a new basin filled with water was set out on the porch, saying it was for the spirits to wash their feet, and straw sandals were left there. And for aged people it is on this occasion that they recall

how they themselves were once grandchildren with their grandparents and also visualize their own grandchildren of today being like them in the future.

61 *A natural experience*

I have already said that there are two rather different meanings in the term "becoming an ancestor," but if we take everything into consideration, we can see that both have the same idea of having one's own house where he can come back at every *Bon* after death. It is my opinion that formerly there were New Year and *Bon*, the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and other fixed days, whatever they might be, or at least once a year when the ancestors could come back home to pass the time with descendants, whoever they were. This view can hardly be of importance to people who doubt about life after death, not to mention those who have no belief in it, yet our countrymen have believed it from the unknown past and a great number had it explained or taught to them by somebody, for they have experienced it as a child, sharing it with parents and grandparents, and even if for a time as young people they half believed, half doubted it, when they grew older and reflected upon what had happened, recalling what they had seen and heard when they were little and the talk of former people, they would feel a strong conviction and begin to practice it, to expect their family to accept it with them and carry out the annual observances without slack, none of them showing attitudes denying that hope. In other words, this faith has been nourished throughout the life of man at home. People have never thought about there being no proof for it, or rather, the faith itself is the basis for evidence of many facts.

Here is one tradition which seems to be peculiar to the region where it has been handed down, but I have been astonished to find it is spread to more than ten places, from the banks of Lake Hachirô in the north to an offshore island of Kagoshima prefecture in the south. There was once a hard working couple who did not rest at *Bon*, and

as they continued to work in their garden, they heard somebody talking as he passed but could see no sign of him as he said, "I returned for this occasion, but they made no preparation for me. It made me so angry, I knocked him down." Startled, the couple rushed home excitedly and found their baby had fallen into the open hearth and was hurt, which is a simple story, not likely to be one carried by professional narrators, but we can see that there were people everywhere who were shocked to hear it. According to another tradition there was a man who was invited by a spirit he had befriended to a *matsuri* at her home. When the master of the house flew into a rage at a servant, the spirit said she did not like that and went out, upon which the man who was left behind became visible—a story which not only has been collected in two or three places, but it is similar to one in *Nihon ryôiki* about what happened at a ceremony at the year's passing in the Twelfth Month, and in China there has been a similar tradition until recent times. Maintaining peace and devotion in the family was an important requisite in greeting souls at a festival, and this attitude has been preserved for a long time through such specific examples of people in the past. It is also a pleasant way of teaching growing youth, who listen to such stories with wonder.

62 *The idea of the world of the dead*

There are various ideas, according to people, about where souls go after death, this being what we could call a distinguishing feature among races. Among advanced peoples this idea has been combined and mingled with a number of other concepts which make them indistinct from each other. It is not easy to distinguish between them. Furthermore, there is nobody with the power to determine which of them is genuine or which is true. Those who venture to clarify these inexplicable matters have surely been possessed by a single idea. If we were going to try to interpret them, it would be necessary to ascertain some facts, but there are other matters which are more urgent than that, and it is necessary to understand present aspects of the problem

in order to do it. Obviously, religion is not theoretical. It is not a narrative of how things were in the past nor a declaration that there is no other way to think. How most of our people usually think about death and how they feel about it are some of the facts we must know, and this actually is a great guide to our country's steps in its progress. At first we must clear up a few small doubts about why there are those views and whether they are really held, and then it is necessary to ascertain the story about the past.

It is a pity that many people only try to memorize historical accounts. Above all we should look at such matters with questions in mind. Our ancestors certainly promised to return to each of us and they never go to some other family. Nobody thought that their destination was not fixed, that they would wander around bewildered and stop in by chance. Ignoring that and urging them to be born into a happy land, encouraging them please to be on their way, was not very courteous treatment. And could people really believe there was any good in doing so. From my point of view, it is rather fortunate that the sutra read at the altar was stale old Chinese, making sense neither to the dead nor the living, so they did not feel unhappy hearing it, for if they had understood its meaning in detail, they would have been startled. There has been that great a difference between the intentions of the temple and of ordinary people. When the two currents of cold and heat meet, the result is fog. Those who were contented with such a made-up theory could not be free from responsibility altogether. People in Kantô and Tôhoku referred to the first day of the month of *Bon* as the "door in the rock," and there was even a tradition that if one put his ear to the ground that morning, he could hear the gate of Hell creak as it was drawn open. And it was said that all of our ancestors were packed together below the ground awaiting this day. The story that Hell was somewhere deep in the mountains of our land made old folk uneasy, but still they half relied upon the old way of thinking. It was far beyond their imagination to think that their ancestors would come to meet them every year on a promised day from such an extreme distance they could not calculate. Preachers

must have gone to a lot of pains trying to explain it, although it was a deceptive teaching. It was really cruel to make people believe the dead were crowded into Hell below the ground.

63 *The explanation of the ascending and descending soul*

One compromise explanation was that a soul was divided. This was expounded to great length by Chu Hsi in China, but I think the idea was even earlier. The idea was expressed most clearly in our country in the Noh text *Sanemori*:

Ware Sanemori no yûrei naru ga
Kon wa meiro ni ari nagara
Haku wa kono yo ni todomarite—
 [I am the ghost of Sanemori;—
 While my *Kon* soul is passing to the other world
 My *haku* remains in this world—]

And there is the same sort of line in *Tomonaga* as words spoken by his ghost,

Kon wa zensho ni omomuke domo
Haku wa shuradô ni nokori tsutsu
 [My *Kon* soul goes to Paradise,
 My *haku* still wanders at the scene of strife].

The *haku*³⁰ seemed to be regarded as something that sank heavy and turbid, receiving less attention, and if it appeared suddenly before somebody with whom it had no ties, that was accepted, but if it came to its own home as an ancestor to be worshipped, it was regarded as an intruder. The concept of a dual soul is present among several peoples of the Far East, and it would not be surprising if it were held among Japanese, but in spite of my deep interest in such study, I have found no trace of it yet. The lines given to ghosts in the Noh play may be of foreign origin, but if it means that the whole soul can not be saved, this is a betrayal of the teachings of Buddhists.

In brief, through such expressions the Buddhists could not but accept

the Japanese thought that ancestral spirits would continue to be in contact with the world of the living. Recently there is an increasing number of people advancing the theory that Shintô in our land has been influenced by Buddhism, but they can not ignore the fact that prior to that Buddhism, itself, had been adapted to Japanese thought. The reason for this was that since the Recent Past all these thoughts and customs assumed Buddhist aspects because of the system of enrolling everyone in one sect or another. Calling *Bon* an abbreviation of Ullambana, *hotoke* the Japanese way of pronouncing Buddha, and such are only a small part of the mistakes. When we think of the works of many great monks and their permeation into the thought of common people for more than 1500 years, we can hardly deny the accommodation of Buddhism to Japanese circumstances. On the other hand, if our people's intentions and the decisions for their families and descendants had been so feeble as to be immediately changed and revised by foreign teachings, our country could not have been brought to its present unity. There may have been times when understandings and explanations fell short, but they were not wrong and we need not be ashamed of them. If they thought over the matters seriously before they set up plans, there may have been no choice other than to go along close to this line. All I want to assert firmly is that the spirits of our people expressed in this great war, especially the sincere feeling for country transcending life and death, has been nourished through the ages in the social system where it had been rooted, particularly influenced by the underlying knowledge of common people. At present it is facing a marked change, but we can still retrace our past to its source. Results of the present circumstances may appear after a number of years have passed. What we hope is that by acquiring knowledge of the origin and results of these matters we may be able to set up plans for the future. Even if we can not proceed to that extent, we can make certain revisions. This is the reason why history is said to be the mirror of the past, and we are always saying that the study of folklore is a scientific way to judge the past. It is impossible to think of the virtue of men dying for their country without a foundation of faith. We can be

sure that formerly faith was held. There is no reason for its having been extinguished today, but unfortunately there are only a few with this complete view today, but nobody is willing to disprove it. This general lack of interest, however, is the cause of grief and anxiety to older people. It is because people are not envisaging man's life in the next world. Whatever conditions are present, scientific study must advance.

64 *Familiarity with death*

It is no recent matter that westerners are suspicious of the lack of fear of death among orientals, but there is no good explanation for the fact. There is no people who does not dread death, but the fear consists of many elements in various ways according to race and culture. While there is no problem about the absolute distinction between life and death, the distance and intimacy between them have not been taken into consideration, and the time was when our people could overcome uneasiness over them. Due to various causes, however, there gradually arose a big barrier, which it is hard to pass without a strong will and deep feeling in individuals, and there was a traditional thought about death other than absolute fear, matured through generations in community life. That faith was not a matter of personal feeling, but a common experience of many people which has never been proved so clearly as through the present war.

But it is too soon now to explain the actions of our noble patriots. Moreover, I would regret considering them along with occurrences in ordinary years. That is why I want to turn the attention of my readers now to life in a country at peace. There are many reasons I can give for the feeling held by Japanese of the closeness to the world of death, a feeling that they could communicate with it. Among the reasons there are some similar to those of people of neighboring countries, especially China, but I do not have time to lay out an explanation of this. If we were to present at least four conspicuously Japanese

elements, the first would be the view that souls remain in their country after death instead of going off far away; the second would be the idea that there are goings and comings between the two worlds, the clear and the dark, and at other than fixed occasions of spring and autumn there were times when the living invited, could invite, the souls; the third would be the idea that the dying wish of the living could be carried out and he could make all sorts of plans for his descendants; and the fourth would be the idea that he could be reborn again and again to carry on in his same work. These articles of belief were eventually very important, but since they did not belong to an organized religion, they were not handed down in writing, and there was no way for people to identify their ideas with those of others, causing small differences to arise among them which made folk hesitate to mention and discuss these matters, and they accordingly lost their power without any pressure from the outside. But if we could gather what people are thinking in their hearts even now, we would find that they are not empty dreams started by only a few people in a certain time. We believe in the divine protection of our ancestors, we entrust ourselves to their favor, and we think there is no need to demand or worry or suffer concerning their assistance, and thus our festivals become occasions for returning thanks and pouring out our complete joys, and this is due to our knowledge learned from past generations; that is, we know through long experience that our ancestors have the power and pleasure to help us under any circumstances. These features of ancestral observances influenced the festivals of the village *Uji-gami* shrine, which are now regarded as something different from observances in the family, and they characterize our national faith. At least two kinds of faith in *Kami* are found, one in which a believer offers his own fervent prayers, stating his age, sex, and details of his petition, and the other in which with complete confidence in the divine insight and warm protection of *Kami* the worshippers observe together the festival as a day of feasting and happiness, the latter prevailing in numbers mainly because it is based upon ancestral worship; to say it more clearly, I think it is because they have fostered a definite common knowledge concerning the life and work in the next world.

65 *The other world and this world*

I would really like to examine and explain what we should consider the common sense of former times, depending upon facts as much as possible without mixing them with imagination, but materials being still insufficient, I can only present a rough idea and entrust the remainder to those who follow with the same interest. The most difficult point is that the eternal life of the soul could not be described even by those who believed in it although we must admit that the spirits themselves did not know this clearly. As to the intercourse between this world and that, those spirits who were closer to this world could more often associate with the living, and people were able to resign themselves to the fact that the farther they went, the dimmer they became, and finally they would fade away.

And where, above all, is that world? People want to be sure about where spirits stay, but two ideas have appeared about that. I make the distinction between old and modern times, one being the revision of the other. On the islands of Okinawa that world is called *gushô* [after life], and they think of it as a place which is very close. Although invisible, those who have gone to the other world can come back whenever they are invited or sometimes they themselves come forward and approach the living at more than the seasonal and monthly observances on fixed days, so it would be especially necessary to imagine a still closer place for the location of the other world. Interest in the problem of *Yûmei-dô* [after world] by Japanese scholars is of such a recent date that we could say it started with Hirata Atsutane, and most of them have the same leanings. A number of records of personal experience, such as *Yûkai shingo* were written by them, but there was a dubious lack of unity due to their great number, while some scholars, trying to give reliable accounts, disposed of odds and ends and offered similar conclusions from materials in common. Matsuura Shûhei, under whom I studied, was one of those believers. Even though we can not see, there is a concealed world between you and me. What we say is always heard by somebody. What we do is seen by somebody. That

is why we must not do wrong, and he always quoted the *Shichi* theory of Yang Chen.³¹ When I look back upon it, this seems one possibility, for there was no way to know whose spirit was nearby and whether it was always there. This theory arose perhaps as a result of the increase of spirits who were completely free to come and go, especially the growing number of those who had no fixed habitation, and it may be one of the traditional aspects of faith that people had come to believe in the constant presence of *Kami* in the shrine so as to make it possible for them to be worshipped there at any time, morning or evening, without holding rituals to invoke them and to send them off. I have a valid basis for thinking that this idea is different from that of people of older times. To the degree reverence was sincere towards spirits, the living felt restraint. Keeping strict restrictions constantly by those who served *Kami* was apt to cause not only frequent occurrence of errors but also hindrance to renewing the impressions of festivals. We knew that there were many things to do in our daily lives that *Kami* and spirits disliked. If we restrained ourselves, we could not carry on life in our homes. Moreover, every day affairs in our lives were increasing in recent times. Feelings about abstinence must have slackened as daily contacts became frequent, but still a certain amount of awe remained, so part of a wide-spread folk faith said that on the night before a festival demons came to look on and the day after the festival was called a bad day. In other words, it was not easy to observe proper respect for days of worship. Those spirits who could go and come freely were formerly only those who had no place to lodge. Their number increased so much with the ages that they got out of control, resulting in frequent appearances of fearful phantoms such as *Misaki-kaze* [forerunning wind] and *Kami-yukiai* [encountering *Kami* or demons], and gradually influencing modern ideas about the after world.

66 *Mountains to which souls return*

People who have passed through life safely go to a place that is

quiet and pure, far from the turmoil of this world, yet which we can actually see in the distance. There surely are found traces of such a place. For example, there are customs still practiced widely in mountain villages at *Bon*, such as clearing a path for the spirits to come down from a beautiful peak in the mountains surrounding the village, meeting the spirit at the bank of a mountain stream, or gathering flowers from the hill upstream. The worship of sacred mountains is of prior date to the arrival of Buddhism in Japan. We can think that Buddhism made use of this in the propagation of its faith. A number of centers of mountain worship have been unified, but when we survey the general distribution, we recognize many local centers of this belief. There are many mountains where the dead are said to go, such at Mt. Usori in Nambu, Mt. Tate in Etchû, and Saijo peak of Mt. Shikimi far back of Mt. Myôhō in Kumano, their sphere of religious influence reaching far, but each mountain has its local jurisdiction, and no spirit makes the mistake of climbing some other mountain. People from a wide-spread area in Chûbu say that the dying person makes a pilgrimage to Zenkôji, and whatever the legend of that temple may say, this belief is based on folk traditions around it, and I can hardly think there is no connection between this temple and the lofty peaks towering near it. I hesitate to mention the names of some other mountains to which men and women in fields at rice planting look up together, singing songs in praise of them as places in which the Ta-no-kami lodges, the deity who is deeply concerned about the fertility of the fields. The protector of the farmer who descends and ascends is their mutual ancestor of long ago, and formerly the faith was more clearly held than now that it would continue forever to protect the original holdings of the family.

There is hardly any doubt that the custom of climbing mountains on the 8th Day of the Fourth Month of the lunar calendar had some connection with this faith although some have mistakenly been led to believe it is to celebrate the birthday of Buddha. There is a custom called *yama-isami* [mountain inspiration] at the foot of Mt. Tsurugi in Awa, where people climb to the heights to look at the sea, and in many places they call this custom the start of picking flowers and other pleasant names, gathering wild azalea, yellow roses, and rododen-

drum, and fastening them to the end of a long pole and standing it up, but it is difficult to find a tie between such customs and Buddhism, and although it seems not to have a connection to faith that souls are in the mountains, this can be explained as coming from the thought that as people climb higher they would overcome the impurities and unhappiness of death. This may hardly be called proof, but there is a faith at present among ascetics who train at Mt. Fuji or Mt. Mitake that along with the years and offerings after death, their souls can gradually ascend from the base of the mountain to the summit and finally become *Kami*. That in the past ordinary people held the same idea can hardly be denied when we call to mind the old burial custom in which they used to bury the body in the direction of mountains.

67 *The Eighth Day of the Fourth Month*

When we read such books as *Jinja taikan* or *Meiji jinja shiryô* we find there are many shrines other than local ones which observe the 8th Day of the Fourth Month according to the lunar calendar as a major festival day, which makes it appear that they had some special features held in common. It may be that I feel this because I approach it with a certain thought in mind, but what focuses my attention is that the important shrines include worship of sacred mountains behind them. This is clear if there are two sacred precincts, one on the height and one at the foot of the mountains, which are called mountain shrine and village shrine, and between which the festival regularly alternates, or there is a well developed ceremony of the *Kami* making a journey to the ritual site outside the shrine where *Kami-togyô* [coming of *Kami*] is celebrated as the most impressive event of the festival. There are surely some examples in which the mountain shrine and the village shrine ignore their ties due to many worldly reasons, but by inquiring how the festival sites and dates of these shrines were selected we can find out their common origin. If we make a survey of mountains which are noted for people climbing them on the 8th Day of the Fourth

Month and compare traditions preserved in villages at their base, there may be more that we could understand, but there is nobody to do it now and certainly nobody in the past did it.

Recently, however, I was given some insight to this. I had thought that compared to Kansai, the observances of the 8th Day of the Fourth Month were rare in Kantô, but Mt. Akagi is climbed on that day. In the two villages, Kurobone and Azuma, at the eastern base of the mountain there is the custom for a member of each family where there has been a death in the past year to climb on that day, calling it going to meet the one who passed away. But since at present they use the 8th of May in the solar year, we think that their sentiment is considerably different from that of the past, but place names remaining in the mountains such as *Rokudô-no-tsuji* [Crossroads of the Six Worlds], *Sai-no-kawara* [Riverbed at the Boundary], *Chi-no-ike* [Blood-pond], *Jigoku* [Hell] and the like show that they are places of worship on the route of a pilgrimage. The question is whether only these two villages along the Watarase river have preserved this old folklore or this religious observance was adopted later by those villages and not by others, but considering it together with the *Jizô* festival at Mt. Usori, I have come to the conclusion that there was a general basic idea for this practice which had been bent to Buddhist teachings and eventually left safely in these villages, just like the *Tama-matsuri* of the Seventh Month.

Holding an ancestral festival in the Fourth Month is an old custom which is not easily found today. Setting aside the question of whether my hypothesis that it is because the Fourth Month was the beginning of the year in ancient times is correct or not, it was certainly an older custom than the *mitama-no-meshi* of the year's end which remains today. As the 8th Day of the Fourth Month became the day of the big festival at the mountain shrine or a time for young farmers to enjoy a picnic before making seed beds for rice, it seems difficult to find any clear explanation for selecting that day. Meanwhile, the idea that spirits go up into mountains is being confined to the realm of imagination. Even though final conclusions can not be drawn, when facts such as practices in the two villages at the foot of Mt. Akagi

are verified, it would be a fresh, new problem for scholars to take up.

68 *Sai-no-kawara*

Names of places in mountains are frequent topics for discussion. The name Jigoku-dani [Jigoku valley] is especially so impressive that we never forget it even when it is newly adopted, but strangely there have been few occasions to inquire why we find this place name so often in the mountains. After I heard about Sai-no-kawara on Mt. Akagi, I began to think about what I had seen in my travels and to think over and count the times Sai-no-kawara was mentioned in writings or that I had heard about it from people in various parts of the country. The first point to mention is that this place name is not written in Chinese characters. In other words, it was in Japanese thought from the start, and Buddhism simply used it in the explanation of Jigoku. It would be worthwhile to look for the reason such a name was created. From the famous *Jizô wasan* [Japanese hymn of praise to Jizô], which is said to have been composed by Kûya, I learned for the first time the pathos of life. And it is through this hymn that Sai-no-kawara is known as the name of the place dead children gather in Jigoku. But few people really think that children go to Sai-no-kawara deep in the mountains. Perhaps half of the people passing such a place along their way believed it as they saw the number of small stones stacked, which were always replaced soon if tipped over. Sai-no-kawara is simply such a place. It is no more than a literary use of a folk tradition in the pathetic and somewhat unreasonable lines of *Jizô-wasan* to draw tears from the eyes of parents.

*Ka no midori go no shosa to shite
Kawara no ishi o tori atsume
Ichijû kunde wa chichi no tame
Nijû kunde wa haha no tame
Sanjû kunde wa furusato no
Kyôdai wagami to ekô shite
Hiru wa hitori de asobe domo*

Hi mo iriai no sono koro wa . . .
 [The small child gathers stones
 And stacks them on the sandbar:
 The first for father,
 The next for mother,
 The third for brothers at home
 And himself praying;
 All the day he plays alone,
 But with setting sun . . .]

Several Sai-no-kawara that remain deep in my impressions are not those which I saw on the way up a sacred mountain. When I traveled from Wada to Toyama in the southeastern corner of Shinshû, there was a little traveled narrow pass for more than a quarter of a mile along the Misakubo river, which flows down Aokuzure. Almost level with the road there was a riverbed called Sai-no-kawara. I stooped to count the stacks of stones. Men are not demons and would not knock them down, but they were piled so loosely that even a slight wind might blow them over. It is said that if they fall, in no time they will be back in place, and here it did not seem strange in the least to me. Even if one were not a father with newly shed tears, he would be moved at the sight and could not pass without picking up a few stones to add to the stack. And usually nobody is seen doing it. Found widely in our land are many such pitiful sights which move the passer-by to offer prayers for the dead, some being a wheel to handle for the dead and others, water to sprinkle on a piece of cloth for them, and the like.

Between Uchikaifu and Sotokaifu on Sado there is a famous site known as Nege-no-Sai-no-kawara. At the foot of a height facing a turbulent sea, far from the village, a cave opens through the rock. There are traces of its likely having been a cavern where corpses were laid in former times although it was not the eternal residence of the dead, and here and there among stone Buddhist figures are stacked little stones arranged by some unknown person. And some say that sometimes prints of children's feet can be seen on the sand and they believe the story in *Jizô-wasan*, but there is no particular tie here to spirits of

children. People on lonely pilgrimages think of the dead, and I think they make these stacks of little stones time and again. A riverbed called Sai was formerly a burial place in Kyoto. Not only because it was just at the outer edge of habitations but because it was the border between this world and that world such a name was attached to it, and more than one person in the past held the view that the origin of this place name chosen was the *Sae* of Sae-no-kami [roadside deity at the border]. That it remains as a tradition of many paths up sacred mountains I consider a phenomenon of deep significance, one apart from Buddhism.

69 *The path to the other world*

Some distance north from Sado there is a Sai-no-kawara on Tobishima, an island in Ugo. Although it is called *kawara* [a riverbed] it is a rocky beach by a rough sea with only a single path leading inland from it to where people live and it is not near an ordinary road, but here, too, a number of stacks of stones have been left by unknown persons. The stones here are much larger, and formerly they were stacked more than four feet high, and it seems it would have been difficult to have put one above the other without using a ladder, but there was nobody known to have placed them there. Nobody thinks that children did it. It is said that even if school boys tipped them over as a prank, in a single night they would be rearranged, but there never seems to have been such an occurrence, and at present they are no longer piled in uniform order. The point that I notice is that from long ago this was considered to be the place the dead came, the burial places of the village being elsewhere. Although there is no fine peak rising from this island, there is a huge rock offshore facing the Sai-no-kawara, its side being a steep cliff which none can scale, and it is worshipped as a sacred site and from its front there is a view spread out of the sacred mountain Chôkai. Formerly there was probably a belief that spirits crossed over to it from this beach although there is no such tradition left now.

According to what I learned from the author of *Tobishima zushi*, men

cutting grass in the hills near there could sometimes hear someone passing to Sai-no-kawara on the path beside them singing in fine voice. At such times there was sure to be somebody dying in the village. And an old man living in a house built facing this path said he heard somebody talking to himself as he climbed it in the middle of the night, and the thought came to him that somebody must have died, and sure enough, the next day there was a funeral in the village. Sometimes there would be somebody sobbing, or he could hear a single deep sigh, and at another time a woman's relaxed voice could be heard humming as she climbed. Perhaps these were hallucinations of an old man steeped in the past, but they occurred from the belief that although the body returns to dust, the soul can act without it.

In a remote country district in Iwate prefecture there was somebody who had an exactly similar experience, which I have recorded. In Iwate they call the place where the dead go Denderano instead of Sai-no-kawara. With slight differences in pronunciation, this name is widely distributed, usually written Rendaino 蓮臺野 in Chinese characters, which I do not admit is correct. My reason is that it was used as meaning an ordinary burial ground or grave with a stone monument where ceremonies were held or a stone ceremonial stand at the entrance of a community graveyard, differing in many ways in places, and this example in Iwate prefecture refers to the high place in the mountains to which the spirit climbs. In a village at the northern base of Mt. Fuji it is said that there is a place called *Nanatsu Denrei*, which refers to seven sacred sites in a row on a highland south of the village. It is not used as the village cemetery now and there are no stone monuments there. Perhaps there was the idea that as the years passed spirits move from one place to another, and I think it may be handed down in the faith of ascetics at Mt. Fuji.

70 *The purpose of the burial service*

I would like to put forth one more idea of mine about the contrast between life and death, one which anybody would admit without ques-

tion, but I think there was a difference in the past in thinking about the boundary between the two. To state it simply, the body of the dead was not regarded as belonging to the other world so it must have been something belonging to this side. It was natural for those who believed in the after life of the spirit to think that the moment it left the flesh it began life in the other world. Even if the spirit had left the body, if there was some reason it could not completely sever its ties to it, I think people thought they could not offer it reverence nor conduct a celebration for it. It is desirable for the living that the dead transfers to the other world to make a clear distinction between life and death, but the body remains as a defiled, unpleasant thing for both sides. Let us say that if we recognize it as a responsibility of this side, disposing of the remains as quickly as possible would be both reasonable and compassionate.

Each people has its own view about this and funeral customs to match it, but under influences of foreign cultures we were in too much of a hurry to make outward revisions in our way. This may be the basis for the differences and similarities within our customs and a lack of mutual understanding of the conditions of others. Arrangements made at a burial among former common people may have appeared meager, for their purpose was the rapid disintegration of the remains with no aim of preserving them. They did not intend to venerate nor serve the dead body as something representing the one in the world beyond. There was no ill treatment of something that should have been preserved. It was unfortunate that the ruling class people did not understand this matter. Previously I have reported on the custom in Shimoechigo of planting a young tree upon a new grave. Or they picked a special colored or shaped rock beside the river or sea and laid it upon the grave, a custom which prevails widely in our country today. Anybody who took part in the funeral could recognize clearly that tree or that rock, but about the time he passed away, this would begin to be forgotten, leaving a natural pine grove or a field of stones. In Tôhoku and other places they leveled off the soil over the grave a little after each anniversary, many people feeling that it was better for it to be no longer recognizable, but when carving words on stones started,

that could no longer be done, and occasionally grave stones were left without care. In Tokyo we could find many tombstones piled up as stone walls along the sloping road at Tera-machi in Yotsuya and other places. On the other hand, some graveyards were cleared away while people still had a vivid memory of burials, which distressed them. Times are getting to be such that we may have to reconsider the custom of the final ceremony at the thirty-third year.

There is no denying we must look for changes in this day when the number of people increases in the limited space of our land. More than three hundred years ago cities were developing and people began going and coming frequently, and already by that time funeral practices had become confused. But there was still open land in rural areas, furnishing a quiet place where the remains of those who had lived in this world could dissolve. It sufficed to lay them far back in the hills or at the far end of an open field. To be sure, a mourning hut was erected near them in which those in mourning secluded themselves for a certain period, but when the purification was accomplished, men returned to their ordinary pursuits, paying no attention to that place thereafter. In the meantime, the spirit, too, was purified and regained its feeling of intimacy, and it could take its place freely at celebrations, finally rising to a high place from which it could gaze upon its beloved descendants and protect them. There were no trifling obstacles to thinking this way. New villages were established in places where no mountains surrounded them, and changes in feeling about such matters arose. Mountains where the dead were to go became designated and put under the control of strong Buddhist temples. Corners of the seashore on small islands where people did not pass much were marked off, as Sai-no-kawara on Tobishima, for the entrance to where spirits could rest quietly, but changes in economic circumstances arose easily, turning such places into what are now landing and loading sites, making the distance between the two worlds look too short.

My explanation so far is not sufficient, but I think there is some relationship between the idea that the spirit leaves the body to go to a high peak and the custom of carrying a coffin to a place near mountains. And there was a belief among us that as the body disappeared by

degrees, the spirit could ascend from the base of the mountain until it finally reached the sacred boundary closest to the sky, where it could join the others and spend its time tranquilly. It is my present view that this was the reason for climbing mountains on the 8th Day of the Fourth Month, and it was the basis for the faith that the *Yama-no-kami* descended to the rice fields to help nurture them. The sea and the sky were a single thoroughfare upon which spirits could freely come and go, but our people have not imagined an eternal island of spirits for them to go to far away from this land. In a word, it was because we loved this land above all.

71 *The boundary between the two worlds*

So far I have tried for the most part to write only about things that are fairly clear and not about groundless opinions or what I am still in the process of studying, but since I have written already what I intended about *Sai-no-kawara*, I can hardly leave it without some conclusion. Facts that such a place name is found by mountain paths and that accompanying it there are the stacks of little stones or large ones piled in unusual form make me think they are traces of an old faith and not just something furnishing evidence for a popular tale about *Jigoku*. When one closes his eyes in death, no longer hearing the voice of his spouse nor the voices of his children, this is surely one threshold between life and death, but something with form remains. When it vanished entirely from the world, the spirit became an invisible power, a benevolence, an object of affection, and there was a great line separating it in the minds of people long ago. After the spirit crossed that line, the communication with it was done by means of rituals, and we were not permitted to associate with it in an ordinary manner. That is the basis for the sense of religious purification and the reason why *Kami* and spirits dislike those who did not keep abstinence. Our faith in mountains as sacred areas may have sprung from the natural features of the land, but the idea of the purification of the spirit is correctly expressed in them. The word *sae* conveys the idea

of a frontier or barrier, and that there are sure to be the strange stacks of rocks left by some unknown person is a sign that mourning and pollution have reached a final point, and the spirit could be seen as having taken its first step in the ascent from this spot toward the pure habitation of deities above. This is nothing to contradict Yomotsuhirasaka³² in the ancient tale of *Kami*. If the dead had stayed in the unclean land forever, their souls could not have been worshipped as pure *Kami*.

As the social life in this world developed, people were inclined to feel too much sorrow for the lately departed who had not yet passed into the realm of *Kami*. Even if they did not depend upon the far-fetched explanations of story-telling nuns, many people thought of spirits as lingering in this borderland. For example, on Tobishima in Ugo, where people can raise their eyes to the sacred mountain rising across the sea just as in the past, few of them now believe that their ancestors of long ago remain on that mountain, and only the uniform mountain worship is found. In towns with harbors and those by the sea there is a great observance of sending spirits away, in which they set many lights on a boat and shove it out to sea, and offerings are made to the countless outsider spirits with the idea of just sending them to a good place, having no thought of the path between the sky and mountain peak, for most of the people have come to think of the other world as a far-off land beyond the horizon. If I am asked which is true, I hesitate to say. What I want to say is that originally Japanese did not think so and traces of the old faith still are preserved, for many people are not inclined to a new faith, either, but they no longer adhere to the belief in entering a pure realm within our land to live forever quietly, and they hold only a vague, uncertain idea that can hardly be called an objective, few being willing to reach a conclusion of returning to a spirit life of absolute nothingness, so they are inclined to let matters rest, avoiding thought about such things as much as possible, an attitude that has continued until recently. Even if they eventually desire earnestly to settle the matter, it may be difficult to do so, but two ways of thinking, old and new, have brought about results very different from each other. One idea is that the spirits return

many times for meetings. The other is that they depart and never come back to meet the family again in this land, death being the start of a journey from which there is no return. The grief at such a parting is countless times greater than in the day of our ancestors.

72 *Songs calling deities to descend*

This discussion has become rather forlorn, so I will take a more cheerful direction in the next topic. I have mentioned it in my book *Minyô oboegaki*, but Mr. Inobe [Tenrai] of Osaka came to see me and repeatedly declared that *Oiwake bushi* was originally in the western part of the country. He pointed to many instances of it and he said he had collected one version with its melody from southeastern Nara prefecture in the valley between the two *gun*, Yoshino and Uda. I heard it with no special interest other than thinking it was unusual at the time, but a number of years later Sasaki Kizen of Iwate prefecture told me another strange story. In the midst of his grief over the death of his daughter, he saw her in a dream three times. The first time was in the night before the observance of the 30th day after her death, in which she was half way up a mountain with a towering cliff and she appeared to be looking around for a path to climb. The second time was on the night before the 40th day, and she was walking alone in the sky world in the blue shining sky with its indescribably bright light. At that time he heard voices singing the slow melody of *Oiwake bushi* and he recalled that she seemed to be keeping step with its rhythm as she moved. A few nights after that he met his lost daughter once more, this time walking on a long bridge below the beautiful blue sky. He spoke to her then and asked, "Where are you now?" to which she replied, "I am on the top of Mt. Hayachine," and with that his dream faded.

Mr. Sasaki added something to the recital of the dream which was the following experience. Several months after his dream he heard a blind *miko* in a certain village in southern Akita sing a song calling

deities to descend, and the first half was exactly the same *Oiwake bushi*. Inquiring from someone, he learned that there were two lines of *miko* in that region, the song of the one which regarded Mt. Haguro as its head-quarters being close to *Oiwake*, and it was used when going to meet a spirit that had gone to dwell in the mountain. The *Oiwake bushi*, as its name indicates, was a horse leading song belonging to *Oiwake* of Shinshû at the western base of the Usui pass, eventually being transmitted to ports of Echigo and later perhaps developed as a song of boatmen in the northern sea. We can conjecture that there is the same reason for the fact that this song was found in the area round the sacred mountain in southern Yamato and that it has been transmitted among *miko* who carried the faith of Mt. Haguro. In other words, in the past when people believed that their ancestors were at the top of high mountains, it is likely that at least in half of the country there was a custom of inviting spirits by singing a song of a similar tune but with different words, and furthermore, on the 8th Day of the Fourth Month, when people climbed sacred mountains and came down, they let people in houses know the descent of ancestral spirits by singing a song which moved them just like the rhyme, "This light," which children say, and later it was adopted by professionals.

If only there were someone with an interest in this, such ideas would not be cast aside as merely visionary. Perhaps time can not be spent upon such matters in days like these, but those melodies surely are preserved still in Mr. Inobe's family, and the *miko* of Haguro scattered in the two prefectures of Yamagata and Akita are not likely to have forgotten that song used for calling deities to descend. Collecting folk songs has progressed considerably since that time, and there are plans to publish them. If similar songs are surveyed in the surroundings of sacred mountains, there may be rather different traditions about them, and something new might be brought to light. This is one means of bringing to view the footprints left by our predecessors, the way our ancestors have passed, which should be an important reference when we decide how our fellow countrymen should live from now on, how they should think about their future.

73 *A man bringing a deity on his back*

Going with a horse to meet *Kami* descending from the mountain has been a rite handed down in ceremonies at shrine festivals in various parts of the country and can also be found in smaller celebrations in families. The *Yama-no-kami* and *Hôki-no-kami* [broom deity], or two other *Kami*, are supposed always to meet at parturition, and many folk tales are about somebody taking shelter in a hollow tree at night, hearing the sound of hoof beats coming and pausing in front of the tree, a voice saying that there is to be a birth at a certain house in the village that night, and inviting someone to accompany him to settle the fortune of the newly born infant. That is a tale found more than once, and in a wide area from Kantô through Echigo and into Oou when a woman's labor is long, there is a custom remaining quite frequently of leading a horse into the hills. Although nothing is visible, if the horse comes to a halt, shakes its ears and tail or turns back in the direction from which it came, they know that a deity is riding it, and the man comes leading the horse back, sometimes turning back at the edge of the village, sometimes going five miles or more into the hills, and even leaving it to the horse for half a day to decide. We can imagine that this formality was also practiced on the 7th Day of *Bon* when the *Bon* path was cleared. We think that the stone monuments were erected as *mairi-baka* from early Edo days, and there are no definite traces of where graves were before that. In other words, there was no fixed place where ancestral spirits were supposed to come, but people did not just stay at home waiting passively for them.

If there was no horse at the farmhouse, how the spirit was met is a question, but perhaps they did as the conscientious old man in a certain village in Shinshû who set out with a newly made rope on his shoulders. That new rope probably had to be tied in a certain significant manner, but if one were to look for a man who knows how to tie it now, he would not likely find one. There was somebody in a mountain village in Iwami in Shimane prefecture who recalled the way they transported *Yama-no-kami* on a straw stand called *senakauji*. They

set the *senakauji* on a place a little higher than the roadside, and then repeated a formula as they drew it along by one hand, and if they forgot the formula for escorting him back, it would be a bad omen, so today it is regarded as a taboo formula. A legend that the village *Uji-gami* first arrived carried upon the back of a pioneer family of the founding ancestor is frequently preserved, but in this case the *Uji-gami* was not represented by any tangible object, such as an image of wood, stone, or metal. Just as when they went to meet the deity in the mountain, one felt by instinct the presence of the deity on his back, which present people doubt, but perhaps there was a sudden sense of weight on the shoulders or a sudden feeling of refreshment by which he knew the deity had mounted. There was probably some hidden relation between the song and the mystic experience. I lack any musical sense so I can not say, but there is quite a bit of material on the subject, so perhaps somebody will give it thought. Neither the entertainers nor boatmen originated *Oiwake bushi*, and horse leaders or the *miko* who did divining got credit only for preserving and spreading this melody, but it must have been sung by others than them from earlier times and sung more widely among our people. The reason for the loneliness and sadness of this song, which do not blend with the surroundings and emotions of those who perform it now, is I think that it was originally the song by which spirits were invited.

74 *The day spirits are invited*

In modern days such people as oracles are no longer legally recognized. Among all sorts of religious practitioners, *kitôsha* [prayers], fortune tellers, exorcists, and the like are permitted to some extent, but professional mediums who call up spirits are under police control. There was great confusion among these practitioners during the Recent Past because they took advantage of ignorant, common people, yet anybody will agree that if pressure is brought upon them unaccompanied with true intellectual enlightenment, it will cause worse ones of them to remain and work secretly, and there is a fear that interference will cut off the way by

which we can trace back the history of our native faith. Due to the great shocks given to thoughts of our people by this war, another change is expected to appear in the faith in them. It would be useful for the politicians of our country to face the matter and know what the results have been.

In so far as it concerns our present discussion, I should mention that the appearance of these professional mediums made communication between the living and spirits more frequent, especially spirits in the borderland on this side of Sai-no-kawara, which I have explained, and it complicated the observance accompanying death. Families have only abbreviated practices at ceremonies for greeting ancestral spirits honored in homes, without employing any other ways. Emphasis at festivals for souls at *Bon* and at the close of the year was put more and more upon the newly dead and the unbidden, unwelcome outsider spirits, while concern about greeting deified ancestors who had contributed to the prosperity of the family became less sincere and less adequate, just as in Buddhist observances.

In ancient records there are accounts of the principal deities of provinces and *gun* taking possession of *miko* and announcing their divine will officially, but in recent times there appeared only lesser spirits who escaped the control of their master deities and threatened calamities full of resentment or made enducements for their own profit to people with whom they had no ties nor acquaintance. Originally the word *tatari* [curse] did not exceed the meaning of manifestation of *Kami*, but later it was something regarded with fear, something to be turned away and enshrined. It was largely due to the base activities of necromancers, and besides, it was because the faith in the *Kami* of each family was weakened and lost power to overcome the uneasiness about calamities, just as in social life the looseness of the tie to the clan led social intercourse to be inclined to flattery.

I regret to say that in this point the real meaning of the ancestral observance and its relationship to the worship of *Uji-gami* was not made known to people. But I will give up this discussion for the present and just explain briefly that as communication with spirits was taken over by professionals, spirits could no longer remain in a peaceful place

awaiting calmly the day when they could become ancestral deities. Various kinds of *miko* who practice communication were found throughout our country, but what they did formerly was about the same as now. They usually called *Kami* and the dead and some also practiced telepathy with the soul of the living, none specializing in just one way, and most of them made their living by communication with spirit of the dead. Formerly there was a fixed day such as the 7th day of *Bon* or the 16th Day *toki-bi* when professionals were hired to transmit words of the dead, perhaps originating in the ceremony of greeting spirits and escorting them back. In some regions the middle day of the vernal equinox was set, and a white flag was hung from the willow tree by the door as a sign to villagers. Attaching more importance to the vernal equinox than to the autumnal is perhaps because they intended to avoid the New Year of the new calendar and adopted the vernal equinox day in advance of the 8th or 15th Day of the Fourth Month, which was the beginning of the year in olden times. Even today old women and those in their middle years crowd to overflowing the house where a medium comes, but with only two days a year the professional can not meet their demands. So there have appeared *miko* carrying a bow made of catalpa wood and walking through villages regardless of the time, and since they say that the spirits of those who died in battle or on a journey without leaving a message could cause a newborn child to be dumb if not given a chance to communicate with this world, the number of people increased who thought that the dead should be called down on the 100th day after death or on the day mourning ended or immediately after the funeral. As long as there are people who think the *miko* is really possessed by a spirit, it is easy for such a faith to continue. It is enough for these professionals to say something as the words from the dead. In fact, they had no difficulty making up information from the other world within the limits of their knowledge, imagination, and experience. Men usually were not inclined to believe in it, but youngsters could not help being impressed, seeing all the tears and grief. But because they confused facts about life in this world and what they said was didactic, people began to suspect them, and they are less successful now because of a declining confidence in

them. Blind women could carry on this practice because their attention was not distracted, but it is necessary now to read the expression on the faces of the listeners, so open eyes are of use to *miko*, which brings smiles today. But there is no denying that the loss of confidence in them has created a lonely gap.

75 *The final wish*

In Kagawa prefecture it is said that if a medium is consulted on a day other than the one in the middle of the week of the vernal equinox, the spirit will drop one level in grade. That folk belief created a problem for professionals, but I am wondering who started the idea. And like the saying that if tears fall upon the dying person, he can not be blessed, it was explained that if he has an attachment to this world, he can not become a *hotoke*, but there is not sufficient explanation about why he can communicate with the living on days during the equinox. Probably it meant that there was only one fixed day in the year when spirits could be asked properly to say things and calling them forth on other occasions or detaining them long in this world to keep ties with them was a way of preventing them from becoming proper ancestral spirits. There was no other way to explain the grades among spirits.

Just as we try every means to search for the one whose fate is unknown, families wished to call out at least once the spirit of the one whose death had been established but not witnessed by anybody to let it speak out what it wanted to say, which was formerly at an observance apart from the regular festival, but later it was performed prior to *Bon* or the equinox, or even on earlier days impatient people might employ an itinerant *miko* to perform it, and I think as grounds for this there is a faith in the after life embraced by our countrymen from long ago. One who passed an ordinary, peaceful, long life and whose mind gradually began to decline, having no fresh hopes, usually did not wish much more than that his family would live on peacefully and take good care of his grave, and such, but it was difficult when a

man suddenly had to go in the prime of life. If nobody lets the one who died be heard, he can not express his plan, something he fully intended to carry out, and matters end with his burial. If it were known, it could be done with little effort, bringing his hopes to fruition, but if it were not told, it would have to be started again from the beginning by somebody else, and others besides him would have reason for regret. In a sense it is the responsibility of those in his family to hear his plan. In the message there may have been trifling things or unreasonable wishes, but while admitting that, it was heartless to reject them all, making obstacles to his salvation. It is likely that such a teaching was not effective in Japan.

I do not know who has collected the stories about ghosts which tell about womanish, worthless, and personal matters that could be laid away unknown without regret, and they are deliberately set out to make us uncomfortable and to teach us to detach ourselves from this world and start off on our journey toward the distant light of Buddha's Paradise, but there were many spirits who came out as ghosts to do justice and to complete their valuable tasks in society. It is a pity such spirits had such a poor means of approaching, and the *miko* they relied upon only grumbled and regretted things, spreading melancholy tales of the previous life and this, until eventually the ghosts have come to be regarded with scorn. Nakajima Hirotari, a scholar in Nagasaki, wrote in his *Kashi no shizue*

Shinkokujin wa shishite yûrei ni natte deru o tôtoki koto ni shite, saru koto no naki hito o, yûrei ni mo enaranu koto tote itaku iyashime otosu meri . . .

[Chinese think it honorable for a man who has died to appear as a ghost, and that those who do not are not able to and they are despised . . .].

I do not know whether this view is really predominant in our neighboring land, but we can find positive traces of its having been held here. The reason ghosts have become shabby at present is because the fondness of people for popular plays and tales, and on the other hand their ignorance of *miko* and their kind. There were other recognized ways from long ago by which a man who had to go at the prime of life

without accomplishing things successfully could make his intentions known to his successors. There was a time when it was believed that he could promise to return in a dream and really speak to the one he met. Death-songs composed on a deathbed were often made purposely appealing to readers, and have deteriorated into an unpleasant kind of literature, but perhaps there is no other country in which it has been as popular as in Japan. Similar writings, even if not called death-songs, have had a broad role as final wishes. Being aware of the difficulty of gaining sympathy from others while they live, men contribute a sizable literary legacy for people who come after.

76 *Removing remaining petitions*

To non-Buddhists it must have appeared unreasonable to see that this surprising faculty of our people of gathering and fulfilling the last wish was led by Buddhist priests to serve the purpose of saving individual souls. There were many works that could not have been accomplished, no matter how much effort was made during a life time, and even if a man would like to believe that after death he could convey his wish to his successors in this world, Buddhist teachers in medieval times guided him to give up his slightest desire and all other thoughts about this world and to hope only to meet Buddha coming on a purple cloud. Notwithstanding this, there must have been many ghosts with good will who had not received such Buddhist salvation, for we see that because of their intentions, together with the efforts of the living, the works of ancestors succeeded in the family, and the teachings of pioneer leaders were handed down in society. And this was probably one of the features of the race who believed that they would live forever in this land.

Japan is a land of *Kami*. More people in the past repeated this saying than now. To tell the truth, I was one who had difficulty grasping that fact, but about this point, I am happy to say at least that even if our religion was painted uniformly with the color of Buddhism, due to the system of enrolling everyone in some sect for

over 300 years, our original idea that was not assimilated with Buddhist thought was reflected vividly in this significant faith in after life. I suppose there must be a way for spreading a religion and tolerating the undeniable characteristics of our country, but ordinary monks without admitting it put effort into oppressing and weakening this original faith. In spite of that, there is certainly a faith among our people, unchanged from long ago, that spirits remain in our land and are trying slowly to attain the position of our national deities. The time has come when we must understand that fact more clearly instead of regarding it as a groundless legend. People are free to choose to believe or not, but it is our work to make them know the facts.

To avoid the theoretical discussion from continuing, I will offer another new subject. Among Japanese customs that students of folklore have difficulty explaining is what is called *gan-modoshi* [returning the petition], *ryugan-hodoki* [releasing the petition], or *gan-harai* [clearing the petition]. Immediately following the funeral or on the day after it there is a ceremony of announcing that the petitions of the deceased to *Kami* have been completed and they withdraw them, frequently by removing the pivot pin of a white fan and spreading it apart and then tossing it over the ridge pole of the roof or by breaking the dishes he used or turning the garment he wore upside down and waving it as they chanted, "*Gan-hodoki* [releasing the petition]." Or sometimes they announced that all his prayers had been fulfilled, and this was usually announced by a person having no blood relationship to the dead. We can recognize the fact that people who did this were concerned over consequences if it were not done, and even though they said they did it just because it was not good to discontinue it, they thought in their hearts that the dead would worry about these petitions and could not proceed to his proper destination. Shaking the garment upside down of course signified the end of the petition, and the white fan was always held in the hand or laid before one when he addressed a deity. Breaking it so it could not be used again clearly meant cutting ties, and it was intended to show that the dead was about to pass out from the regulations and control of what they called *Shinbutsu* [*Kami* and Buddha], but they thought mainly of *Kami*. Once they had passed through their

land in this world, there were clearly two different ways, for the Buddhist priests had not yet set up a compromise plan for it. At any rate, one of the ways had to be ignored, and among the Buddhist believers there were those who could not do that. Fortunately or unfortunately, in our natural native religion the pure theory which was accepted in primitive conditions still continues to exist. Our weakness has been the lack of light upon the idea of the other world. Our feelings are consequently shut up by uneasiness and we follow explanations of eloquent people. The efforts of studies of *Yûmeidô* in the Recent Past seem to be aimed at coping with that. A chapter in *Matsu no ochiba*, by Fujii Takanao beginning with "*Hito wa nochi no yo no tame nimo kami o matsuri inoru beki koto* [a man should pray and offer rites to *Kami* for the sake of the world hereafter]" surely is the statement of a man with faith in *Kami*. He says that a man should entreat *Kami* who control the afterworld and if the *Kami* did not allow it, his spirit could not return to this world to do anything. He asserts the truth of the world beyond, saying that the reason the spirit of the dead can approach in dreams or make their forms apparent is due to the favor of the divine heart of *Kami*, and his argument depends upon the thought that the faith of each family had conspicuously common features with that of the race, an element of a new explanation which could be debated. Another explanation should be offered by scholars hereafter. But we must pause and consider with him in our hearts the natural unity of this land.

77 *Rebirth*

In order to explain how the two worlds, this bright one and the dim, concealed other one, were intimately near each other in Japan, there is still another matter to mention, that of rebirth, the faith that the soul returns to this world to live again aside from its annual visits. This is a folk tradition found flourishing in China, and transmigration is a characteristic theory of Buddhism, but the teaching of the Sutra did not support our original idea, making it rather obscure. When we

consult written works, we find only the explanation that can be applied to matters of any country, but in the present social phenomena there seem to be some traditional materials which may be the basis for the study of our indigenous thought. One point was that the transmigration of the soul, the theory that human souls fall into the world of demons or animals according to what they did in former lives, did not exist in old Japan, and it seems to have been imported from China. In our country a spirit can occupy a tree or a stone only at the times of a *matsuri*, and we recognize that there is a soul in various things, but there is scarcely anybody who thinks that a man transfers into an object. This is the reason I think that through discipline souls can ascend to a higher world, which I refer to as purification of souls, removing them from the defilement of this world and enabling them to climb so high that they can be called *Kami*, which does not resemble the other idea of transmigration, for in that concept they continue to carry their individuality as they go, but this way, after a sufficient time has passed, they become merged into the body of the great spirits. I can not guarantee, with my power, that it is true, but by the time they have attained the position where they can be worshipped, there is no longer an occasion by which they can be reborn.

All this does not go beyond negative denials, so it should be revised if other evidence is found, but there are more definite, positive features which are different from those of other countries. One of them is that even while alive the body and soul are different, and they can frequently choose to separate. That is a sort of individual achievement, and sometimes people can be found after having become mature whose soul can go to a distance alone and when its errand is accomplished it can return, and there are many stories, especially about when faced with death, how a man can go to the one he wants to see. In Senhokugun people who can fly anywhere in dreams are called *tobi-damashi* [flying soul], and those who come just before death to see somebody are called *amabito* in Tsugaru, but either way, there are those besides professionals who have the power to see such visitors. I often heard such stories in places other than Tôhoku, but at present they are all about spirits of the dead, which may be considered as one change.

In general, the spirit of an infant can leave its body most easily, and in spite of charms to protect it from such a happening, it was thought that there was a certain period before the soul entered an infant. In various places in Chûbu they say they ask the *Ubusuna-gami* [deity of the place of birth] to put a soul into an infant on the day it is brought to the shrine, and in many villages it is said that by means of the sound of the drum during the sacred dance in that day the spirit enters the baby or the soul is bestowed by the *Kami*. In other words, the soul is under the care of the local deity, and because of receiving it, the body becomes something of value for the first time, just as in the ceremony of putting eyes in the newly made Buddhist image, and as in the ritual of placing the symbol of a deity in a new boat or house or into the portable shrine at festivals is called *ubu-o-ireru* or *utsutsu-o-ireru*, the same phrase is used for the child being taken to the shrine. It seems that worshipping men as *Kami* germinated from this thought and that they were not gradually promoted to *Kami*, but I can not formulate the idea.

78 *The family and the infant*

There is another of what we could call a special feature of rebirth in Japan which is the idea that a soul can be rejuvenated. They call the soul of an infant *maburi* or *ubu* or *utsutsu*, and there was much danger compared to older people of its soul separating from its body, so the child's soul could easily be transferred to another life, being alert to the chance of its leaving or entering a body. On the islands of Okinawa they had a place set apart for graves called *warabe-baka* for children who died under the age of six. There were terms *ko-sanmai* or *ko-baka* in Kinki and Chûgoku for children's graves and they are set apart from those of adults. The ceremony at funerals has also several different points. There was no attempt to simplify them because they were for little children, for on Sado they hung a special basket of flowers for a decoration, and at Iyayama in Awa they erected a stone shaped like a boat. On the northern part of Tsushima they make a carving of

a Buddhist image on the upper half of the gravestone and color it for the grave of an infant. In rural parts of Kantô and Tôhoku a grave is purposely unmarked for an infant, but instead they frequently buried it under the floor, and *miko* had a saying, "the soul of young leaves," which did not only mean that there was no pollution present, but that the soul of young leaves was precious and could soon be reborn to the light of this world, and that it should be laid in a place as near as possible so that it could return more easily. In an area in the eastern part of Aomori prefecture, they put a fish into the hand of the infant before it is buried. In some other houses they dress the infant in purple and put a little dried fish into its mouth. Exactly opposite to the above mentioned custom of withdrawing petitions at the deathbed, they intend in this way to keep the infant from the control of the Buddhist way by means of the raw fish, which seems to have some connection with the widely spread saying that a child was a *Kami* until he was seven. In Tsugaru they get a young woman to tread upon the grave of an infant. Just as giving the child a fish in Nambu, people explain this was to make it possible for the infant to return soon.

If we were to think that souls are reborn in this way from long ago, there would be no reason to think there are new spirits, but we can conjecture that depending upon where it took its abode, the soul could rejuvenate itself. Apparently the souls of men in their prime are much more powerful in enduring difficulties and executing what they determine than weary souls of those who have lived and worked for seventy or eighty years. And if the soul has suddenly to leave its body before it exhausted its power, where was it to go? They probably thought of such a condition. What they called a period becoming young was when many young people came out and worked in it. The use of the word *waka* [youth] for a virtue or euphemism is clearly seen in old writings of Japan. The aged spirits who are wearied with old age want to rest as long as possible and then return to strong, active bodies again. People may have thought that the end of this period of rest was the thirty-third year after death when the final tablet was erected on the grave.

79 *Rejuvenation of the soul*

At the fiftieth anniversary for the dead in Kôshû they plant a willow tree after scraping one side of the trunk a little and set up a sign reading *Sômoku-kokudo-shikkai-jôbutsu* [plants, trees, soil of the land, all will become Buddha], calling it the willow tablet. Sometimes this tree will take root and that is considered a sign that the soul of the dead has been reborn. If somebody exchanges words with a dead person in his dreams, it is considered proof that he has been reborn somewhere according to people in the village called Oshino at the northeastern foot of Mt. Fuji. I think that usually such a matter occurs before the final anniversary tablet is erected, for many people thought that before the soul had crossed Sai-no-kawara and had not reached the summit of the sacred mountain, he would be reborn to the human world among the same people and in a place so near that they could see him.

It is well known that parents or grandparents who lose a beloved child want to learn where it is going to be reborn and they write something on its arm or on the palm of its hand, which is sure to appear when it comes again into the world, and if the mark is not rubbed off with soil from its former grave, it can not be erased. So there were even strange stories told as a real happening, such as a man coming secretly from the home of a *daimyo* or *chôja* [prosperous man] to get soil from the grave of a villager. To be sure, this is a kind of literary tale and it may be correct to say that it sprang from foreign seed, but, any way, if we are not told about it, we can not know the rebirth of somebody. A third feature of the idea of rebirth in our country was that of believing that one would surely be reborn to the same kin group and to the same blood line. Traces of this belief are not completely lost. On the Miura peninsula of Kanagawa prefecture they say that the one who inherits the family is a reborn ancestor. Even if it is not so generalized an idea, there are a number of instances of people declaring that a certain child is such a one reborn, so the child himself believes he is somebody reborn. If somebody who knew both well explains that the child's face or personality has a marked

resemblance, people who do not know the theory of heredity find themselves believing it. Perhaps there was a time when grandparents were thought of as having been reborn into grandchildren. To support this idea we find many examples of the given name of the head of the family being handed on every other generation, and in Okinawa the grandfather's name was usually given to the first son and the grandmother's to the first daughter. But we have a feeling that was a bit too soon, pressing matters too much. And there was no reason, either, why it had to be done that way.

There are also stories of how somebody himself recalls dimly that he has been reborn. The story of the rebirth of Katsugorô, which was popular among dilettantes of Edo about one hundred years ago was told as a real event that occurred in a village near Hachiôji, and it is said that a five-year old boy told the secret of his birth only to his sister, saying she should not tell anybody. It happened that his parents knew this, and when they went to the village over five miles away to inquire, they found that the child's name was the same as that of the former child, by which they realized it was true. That was a period when invented stories were popular, so we can not accept it offhand as proof, but such a story would be essentially hard to verify, and if it was told by the person in question himself, those who heard it could not but believe it, for there were psychological grounds prepared for accepting it. In the village where I was born there were all kinds of ceremonies on the baby's first birthday, among them that of putting the baby into a basket and joggling it around and asking where it had come from. The vocabulary of an infant is rather limited. It might say *wan-wan* [dog] or *mômô* [cow] and often it would only laugh, but if it happened to say something like *there* or *here* or point toward the cemetery or to the woods around the *Uji-gami* shrine, people did not pass it by with just exchanging glances. The former life was frequently the topic of conversation among people and they listened to what the little child beside them said. Anywhere in our country they made note of unconscious sayings and tried sometimes to get the baby to say something. Taking care to treat the child with deference was more minutely shown in the past than at present, for beyond the feeling that he was one

who would work for the continuance of the family, they may have thought vaguely that the soul of a distant ancestor had been reborn into him.

80 *Reborn seven times to one's country*

We can not accept nor deny it unless we ascertain the point further, but people thought, at any rate, that the other world was not a far away land, and according to their desire they could come and go any number of times to this world, and, furthermore that they could be reborn into the human world to carry on, and anyone had a wish to be reborn seven times to his land. Such were the last words of Lt. Col. Hirose [Takeo] when he went down on the ship that blockaded Port Arthur, and it was already a famous quotation known to young men in the service. We must admit that there may have been some among them who only admired and repeated the words as a poetic expression, but we do not doubt that for a young soldier facing death it was an appropriate phrase to recall at the moment. And many youths now follow his example sincerely. And these words have transcended literature to become an ideal for our people.

When we read carefully the following words from *Taiheiki* we find a faint presence of its trace discernable. Until recently I had not noticed, but it has impressed me deeply.

Te no mono rokujû yo nin rokken no kyakuden ni nigyô ni narabite, nembutsu juppen bakari dôon ni tonaete ichido ni hara o zo kittari keru. Masashige zajô ni oritsutsu, shatei no Masasue ni mukaite, somo-somo saigo no ichinen ni yotte zen-aku no sei o hiku to ieri, ku-kai no aida, nanika gohen no nozomi naru to toi kereba, Masasue kara-kara to uchiwaraitte, shichi shô made tada onaji ningen ni umarete, chôteki o horobosabaya to koso zonji sôrae to môshi kereba, Masashige yo ni ureshige naru keshiki nite, zaigô fukaki akunen naredomo, ware mo kayô ni omou nari. Iza saraba onajiku sei o kaete, kono honkai o tassen to chigirite, kyôdai tomo sashi chigaete onaji makura ni fushi ni keri.

[After reciting ten *nembutsu* in unison, the more than sixty followers, seated in two rows in the hall, slashed their abdomens in unison. Seated at the head place, Masashige turned to his younger brother Masasue and said, "It is said that according to our final wish we carry on for good or bad. Throughout the nine worlds [which we must pass], what is your desire?" Masasue broke into a smile and replied, "I would be reborn seven times to the same man and destroy traitors." Looking greatly pleased, Masashige declared, "Though it may be thought a sinful desire, I hold the same thought." After agreeing to return to the same life to satisfy their cherished desire, each brother fell on the sword of the other and they lay side by side in death].

It appears that there was a time when it was regarded as a sin for a man to wish to return and to be reborn. Could this have been the common view at the time of Lord Kusunoki? Could it have been something inserted later by monks at Kôgenji when transmitting the story? Could it have been a fancy touch added by a reciter? This is not the time to ask which of the three possibilities is right. It has been a long time since our people have forgotten to question whether it was malice or spite, for they have just revered their intentions.

In *Nenzan kibun* by Andô Tameakira there is a poem written at death at the age of 72 by Murakami Yoshiko, who served [Tokugawa] Mitsukuni of Mito and later became a nun called Issei-ni.

Mata mo kon hito o michibiku enishi araba

Yatsu no kurushimi taema naku to mo

[I would come again despite eight sufferings

If I could return to lead mankind].

Which was a courageous final wish for a woman and for a Buddhist, but it is sad that we have no way of knowing clearly whether she found some way to be reborn. This life is often a world of many sufferings, but if we are afraid of them and all go to another world, we cannot be sure of bright prospects for our next generations. The desire to be reborn to improve matters is a just one. To be able to believe that generations of ancestors come again and again to serve their country has been especially fortunate for us.

81 *Two existing problems*

There has been a certain satisfaction to me that in the midst of daily alarms I have been able to gather this long account to a close. Although I would like to have waited until quieter days and have taken more time to write, the reason I did not was more than simply the fear I might forget in the meantime about this. In the past many people would set out for somewhere and after they had attained success, they would eventually return to live among their relatives and old surroundings, but recently the feeling of people has changed, and they put their roots down at their destination and try to set up a new family, the number of such people struggling against hardships toward that aim increasing each day. Continuance of the family is a big problem now. The influence of climate and natural conditions upon us can not be regarded lightly, but people starting life in a new environment did not wish to lose their identity immediately in their new natural surroundings. Because it was a small, lonely group of people at first, they must have relied upon ties of lineage. And their intentions were expressed in their plans, desires, and love for their descendants. It is impossible for us to imitate everything people did long ago, but it is necessary for our reference to know what they did. When people lived peacefully and had few changes, they could believe that their descendants would love them and give them *matsuri* with the same feeling of affection as they had had for their forefathers. Actually, however, conditions in society were changing and people began to feel disappointed in some of its phases. In order to lessen their grief over it, we have not only to anticipate that society will change but to put as much energy as possible into setting its direction toward what we think is the right way at present. The ideal family is a problem we must consider within it and from without. It is recognized that one of the reasons for the prosperity and power of Japan for several thousand years is the firm construction of the family. And I think it was founded upon faith. Faith is nothing that can be laid out according to reason, and it is difficult to

check a person turning against it, and although most of us have accepted it naturally, they have not had a chance to ponder over it and talk about it. If something about it is stated too positively, it produces a contrary effect, and there might be danger of its being extinguished, so after ascertaining this point further, I must reconsider this problem.

And the second matter which must be dealt with immediately is the relationship of the family to those who died with no child. I have already explained in detail about how ideas regarding this have changed to a marked degree since Buddhism came, but we can not be content to estrange the youth who have offered their lives to their country in war and leave them in the ranks of outsider spirits. To be sure, there are recognized places where *matsuri* are offered to them, established nationally and at prefectural level, but we can not ignore feelings within families for their own flesh and blood. By fulfilling the responsibility to the family and preserving the duty to continue it, we can maintain the memory of the past, carry on the desire of the ancestors, and keep observances for them, but now there is a need of reviving the thought that ancestral observances must be performed by people in direct descent. If the one who died was to have inherited the family line, he may be included among ancestors, and if it was a second son or a younger brother, he can be recognized as the founder of a new branch family. As relatives who grieved over their death pass away, their souls are ignored and go wandering about to look in on other family altars, an undesirable condition for helping them go peacefully into the other world and to soothe minds disturbed by the war. It is needless to mention the ancient examples of *Koshiro* or *Nashiro*³³ at the Imperial Court, there being an old custom among our people by which the family has continued from aunt to neice, from uncle to nephew, and even for one who is not related by blood to become heir to the family name. Establishing new families for those who devoted their lives to their country, making them founding ancestors may give us a chance to rebuild our native view of life and death. Such matters belong to politics, which lie outside our study, but the

one weakness of our country is the lack of interest in learning among politicians, who leave that only to people with plenty of time on their hands, so that is why I have instinctively expressed my view.

Showa 20, May 23

(May 23, 1945)

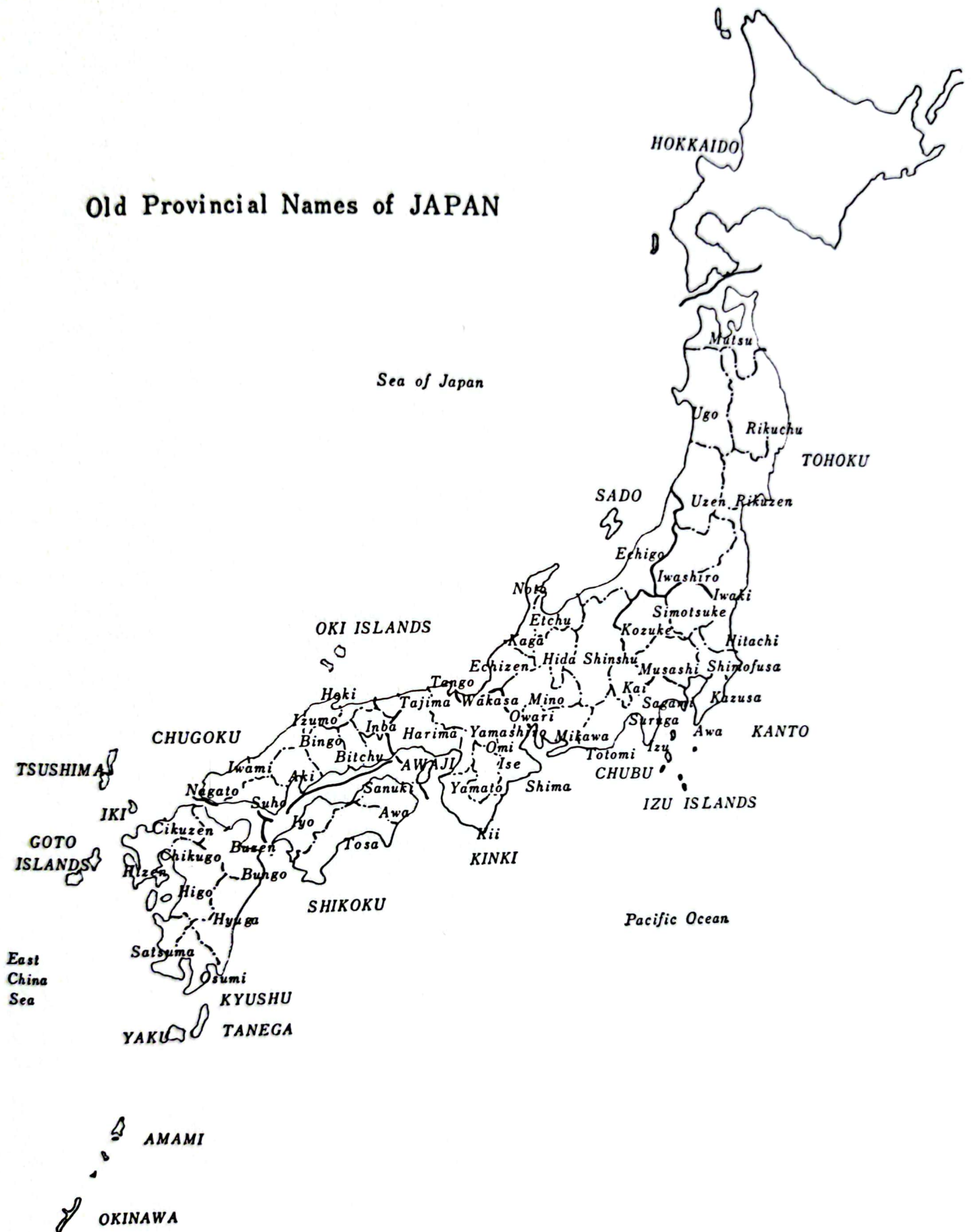
ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS

Notes by the translators

- 1 This passage refers to the reaction of people to the sudden loss of life in great numbers in battles and during bombings in the homeland.
- 2 *Kami*: The reference here is to personages appearing in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, who belonged to the ruling class before Emperor Jimmu and who were given the title *Kami*. The use of the word in another sense will become clearer in the text.
- 3 *Sengoku*: The age of civil wars (1480-1600) during which old power was destroyed and feudal lords throughout the country fought among themselves.
- 4 *koku*: A measure of rice of approximately five bushels used as a basis for reckoning income from feudal times.
- 5 *Bon*: The festival for souls of ancestors which is observed within families, usually beginning in the evening of the 13th Day and ending in the evening of the 16th Day of the Seventh Month.
- 6 *Hotoke*: The ancestral spirit worshipped in the family. The term is discussed later in the text.
- 7 *Matsuri*: Religious rites or festivals held in the home, at shrines, or at other public places.
- 8 *Gempei* and *Tôkitsu*: *Gempei* stands for Genji (Minamoto) and Heishi (Taira). *Tôkitsu* stands for the Fujiwara and Tachibana families. These four are the principal Japanese family lines.
- 9 Medieval times (*Chûsei*): Apart from definitions of historians, this term is usually applied to the Kamakura and Muromachi (Ashikaga) periods (1192-1576). Only the term Recent Past in the text is a clear reference to a historical period, that of the Edo or Tokugawa (1603-1868).
- 10 Hachiheishi of Bandô: Eight powerful families branched off from the Heishi in Bandô, another name for Kantô.
- 11 *Toshikoshi*: In addition to concepts of the old and new year also held in the west, the boundary between the two is observed as *Toshikoshi* in Japan.
- 12 *Sujikai*: The pun here is upon *Sujikai*, a place name in Kanda, Tokyo, and *sujikai* meaning oblique. *Sujikai ni tsuru* has the double meaning of making a shelf at *Sujikai* and hanging a shelf at an angle to the wall to face the good direction.
- 13 *Mitama*: The honorific form of *Tama*. Discussion of this is in Chapters 37 and 38.
- 14 *Rokudô*: The six worlds in which souls of the living beings transmigrate: Hell, the world of hungry spirits, animals, asuras, men, and heaven.
- 15 *Muen Sama*: A soul who has no descendant to worship it. Further discussion of this is in Chapter 39 and following.
- 16 *buraku*: a group of houses or a subdivision of a village.
- 17 Day of the Snake or Horse: The Day of the Snake and that of the Horse are Zodiac signs. The names are applied to the hour, the day, the year, as well as direction.

- 18 *Go-sekku*: Five festival days celebrated at home: the 1st Day of the First Month (*Jinjitsu*), the 3rd Day of the Third Month (*Jôshi* or *Hina-matsuri*), the 5th Day of the Fifth Month (*Tango*), the 7th Day of the Seventh Month (*Tanabata*), and the 9th Day of the Ninth Month (*Chôyô*).
- 19 Day of the Hare, Day of the Dragon: See Note 17.
- 20 *taro*: A common name for a food plant of the aram family, *sato-imo* in Japanese.
- 21 *hiragana*: Japanese phonetic characters made from Chinese characters in a cursive style.
- 22 *Sangai-banrei*: This refers to All Souls of the three worlds of unenlightened men: the world of desire, the world of form, and the formless world.
- 23 *Gokai* and *Jikkai*: The *Gokai* are five commandments against murder, lust, theft, lying, and drinking or intemperance. The *Jikkai* are ten commandments including these and five more against eating meat, malice, insult, slander, and deception.
- 24 Mention of this poem appears in *Makura no sôshi*: A noted monk Dômei wrote these lines when he saw a man praying and making an offering at *Bon* to the soul of his father, whom he had pushed into the water to his death because he was ashamed of him.
- 25 *Namuamida*: An invocation to Amida.
- 26 *Osaragi Jirô*.
- 27 *imi*: The word is used in two ways. In one it means religious purification and abstinence and in the other it refers to mourning and certain pollutions. Originally *imi* meant purifying oneself and abstaining from pollution of death or blood to prepare for a *Kami* festival.
- 28 The movement of the national unification policy about the time the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were compiled in the early 8th century resulted in many shrines of local deities and *Uji-gami* being unified and put under the control of the Imperial government.
- 29 To restore the pure Shintô faith of Japanese people, the Meiji government proclaimed the separation of Shintoism and Buddhism and gave protection to shrine Shintô. As a result, small shrines were combined under the central shrine of a local administrative district.
- 30 *haku*: *Haku* and *kon* are dual phases of the soul. *Kon* belongs to the spiritual and *haku* to the material phase.
- 31 *Shichi*: Four know. This term comes from the biography of Yang Chen 楊震 in 'How Han Shu 後漢書. When Yang Chen, a man of Eastern Han 東漢 period refused to receive money which was presented to him secretly by a man on a dark evening, he said to the man that he could not accept it because "Heaven knows this secret, the Earth knows it, I know it, and you know it."
- 32 *Yomotsuhirasaka*: The name of the place passed on the way to the entrance of the land of *Yomi* (the land of the dead). This name appears in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.
- 33 *Koshiro* or *Nashiro*: *Koshiro*, a new clan established for the childless prince; *Nashiro*, a new clan named by the childless concubine, prince, or princess.

Old Provincial Names of JAPAN



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